

The Generational Narrative

*A case study of political participation among
Tunisian youth*

Astrid Pettersen



Master's Thesis in Political Science
Department of Political Science
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33 206 words

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<http://www.duo.uio.no/>

Trykk: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo

IV

Abstract

The youth were central actors during the 2011 revolution in Tunisia that resulted in the toppling of the Ben Ali regime and the instauration of a democratic political system. However, the number of Tunisian youth active in politics quickly decreased as older cohorts took the reins of the political transition, a problem often analyzed and discussed in the literature on youth political participation in Tunisia. A group of Tunisian youth that on the other hand has *not* been given much attention in academic research is those young Tunisians who have remained politically active. If the goal is to increase youth participation in Tunisian politics, it is important to listen to those who already are active in politics, and attempt to understand what explains their continued political participation. This is what this thesis attempts at. By employing theoretical propositions from democratic transition theory and social movement theory, Tunisian politically active youth's opinions and thoughts regarding their role in Tunisian politics, as well as their motivations for being politically active, are analyzed.

The analysis finds that politically active youth tend to regard Tunisian youth in general, and in some cases also youth active in other political organizations, as excluded from politics. At the same time, however, politically active youth themselves tend to feel included in politics and believe they have a possibility to influence decision-making in the political organization they are members of. This contradicts much of the existing literature on the topic. Furthermore, the analysis finds that politically active youth in Tunisia are primarily motivated to be active in politics by issues that cut across the Islamist-secular cleavage, such as economy, change, and security, while personal gains do not seem to have the same motivational effect. These results challenge the theoretical propositions employed, while also outlining some new, additional elements that should be taken into account in future research on political participation among Tunisian youth. Finally, the analysis uncovers a common generational narrative present among Tunisian youth, shaped by the historical experience of the 2011 revolution.

Acknowledgments

First of all, I wish to thank my supervisor Inga Brandell for giving me invaluable advice and challenging me throughout the whole process of writing this thesis, whether we met in Tunis, Stockholm, or Oslo.

I also wish to extend my gratitude to Fritt Ord for financial support to my fieldtrip in Tunisia, and to NIBR for offering me an office space. I am also very grateful to ILPI for giving me the opportunity to work with Tunisia from another perspective.

A special thank you to those who helped me in one way or another prior to and during my time in Tunisia, and especially to all those young, inspiring Tunisians who took the time to answer my questions, and who made me discover the kindness and hospitality of the Tunisian people. This thesis would not have been possible without you. Merci beaucoup!

Thank you to all of those with whom I have discussed my thesis and who have encouraged me throughout the process, and especially Lisa-Marie. Our discussions and occasional excursions made the time in Tunisia even more enjoyable.

I am also very grateful to my parents, who always have supported me in all possible ways. I would not be where I am today without you. And finally, thank you Carl for always believing in me and being there for me.

Any mistakes or inaccuracies are my own.

Astrid Pettersen

Oslo, 16.05.2016

List of Abbreviations

AK Parti	Justice and Development Party
CPR	Congrès pour la République
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FTDES	Forum Tunisien des Droits Economiques et Sociaux
IS	Islamic State
JID	Jeunes Indépendants Démocrates
LTDH	The Tunisian Human Rights League
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NCA	National Constituent Assembly
NDI	National Democratic Institute
RCD	Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique
SNS	Social Networking Site
UGTT	Tunisian General Labor Union
UTICA	The Tunisian union of industry, trade and handicrafts

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1 Introduction

Article 8

Youth are an active force in building the nation.

The state seeks to provide the necessary conditions for developing the capacities of youth and realizing their potential, supports them to assume responsibility, and strives to extend and generalize their participation in social, economic, cultural and political development.

Tunisia's Constitution of 2014 (Constitute 2015)

During the 2011 Jasmine revolution in Tunisia, the youth assumed its role as drivers and leaders of the nationwide popular upsurge that would terminate the 22 years long presidential mandate of Zine el Abidine Ben Ali, spread to the rest of the Arab world, and eventually turn the whole region upside down. The youth was so significant during these defining weeks that the revolutions by many were called “the youth revolutions”. Some characterized the youth as “awakened”, no longer passively accepting the authoritarian rule of their country, and going out in the streets to demand dignity, freedom and democracy (Collins 2011: 6-7; Hoffman and Jamal 2014: 273-275; Parker 2013).

However, the youth's high expectations following the revolution were gradually crushed, as the now democratically elected politicians did nothing with the youth's main grievances such as unemployment and poor economic opportunities. A 2014 World Bank report¹ revealed that among Tunisians between 15 and 29 living in rural areas, 33,4 % of men and 50,4 % of women were unemployed or not enrolled in an educational program. Among those living in urban areas, 20,3 % of men and 32,4 % of women were in the same situation (Banque Mondiale 2014: 24-26). The widespread protests the country experienced in January 2016, concentrated in the marginalized inlands but also spreading to Tunis, confirmed how especially youth living in disfavored regions such as Kasserine and Sidi Bouzid have not seen any socioeconomic change for the better during the five years since the revolution (Younes 2016). ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller's Arab Youth Survey from 2016² reports that among the Tunisian respondents, 24 % agreed in the statement “following the Arab spring, I feel the

¹ The quantitative study effectuated by the World Bank in 2012-2013 employed a sample of 4214 urban households and 1400 rural households (Banque Mondiale 2014: 7).

² The quantitative study effectuated by ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller in early 2016 employed a sample of 200 Tunisian men and women between 18 and 24, sampled from Tunis, Sfax and Sousse (ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller 2016: 6-7).

Arab world is better off'. This was a decrease from 2015, when 35 % of the Tunisian respondents agreed in the same statement (ASDA' A Burson-Marsteller 2016: 25).

This disappointment among youth extends to the political scene as well. In his Carnegie paper "The Reckoning: Tunisia's Perilous Path to Democratic Stability", Boukhars (2015) argues that a feeling of exclusion from the political process is prevailing among the youth in Tunisia, and a growing generation gap is dividing the country. The political scene is dominated by old faces, while the youth are detached and excluded from politics. While, according to the National Institute of Statistics in Tunisia (INS 2015), those between 15 and 29 represented 27 % of the total population in 2015, they are weakly represented in the ruling political elite³, and their abstention from voting in the first free presidential elections since Ben Ali in November 2014 was a cause for concern (Mekki 2014; Reidy 2014). Alaa Talbi, executive director of FTDES (Tunisian forum for economic and social rights⁴), expressed to *Orient XXI* a concern regarding the divergence between the current Tunisian political agenda and the main concerns of the youth, claiming that "the youth is marginalized in the political parties"⁵ (Mekki 2014). A study carried out in 2013 by the National Youth Observatory revealed that as few as 2,7 % of the youth were members of a political party, while 65 % believed that none of the objectives of the Jasmine revolution have been attained (B'Chir 2013).

Nevertheless, a minority of Tunisian youth remains active in politics, despite these negative tendencies. However, most of the existing literature on youth and political participation in Tunisia focalizes on the exclusion from and disinterest in politics among youth, and few thorough analyses have been conducted on the minority that continues to be politically active, five years after the revolution. Although they have been given some attention, mostly in the press, few researchers have attempted at exploring their activism more in depth. Nur Laiq's publication *Talking to Arab Youth* (2013) represents a notable exception. As she puts it, "[w]hile youth activists have gained much front-page press, there has been little in-depth exploration of their ideas and actions" (Laiq 2013: 3). The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to the literature on youth and political participation in Tunisia by attempting to fill this gap. What explains that, in contrast to most young Tunisians, politically active youth's 2011 "awakening" was not substituted with political passivity and disinterest? What

³ According to Mekki (2014), the average age of the members of the NCA was almost 50 years. Furthermore, when the new parliament was elected in 2014, only 20 % of its members were under 40 years old.

⁴ The acronym is based on the organization's French name, Forum tunisien des droits économiques et sociaux.

⁵ Translated from French by the author.

characterizes those who are politically active? These puzzles make it increasingly necessary, relevant, and interesting to analyze politically active youth in Tunisia. The thesis' overarching research question attempts at addressing this need by asking:

What explains the continued political participation among a minority of Tunisia's youth?

To answer this research question, two more precise sub-research questions that address specific topics have been developed:

- What role do politically active youth believe they have in Tunisian politics?
- What are Tunisian youth's motivations for being politically active?⁶

To be able to answer the overarching research question, these more specific research questions will have to be examined first.

As the topic, purpose and research questions of the thesis have been presented, a discussion regarding why this is an important and relevant issue is in order. This discussion will be conducted in the following section.

1.1 Why study Tunisia's politically active youth?

The 2011 revolution proved the enormous impact Tunisia's youth can – and want to – have on the development of the country, and that they will be heavily involved in shaping the future both of their own country and of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region (Laiq 2013: 5). To understand the course Tunisia is taking, it is therefore important that the relationship between youth and politics is given special attention. In this context, it is not necessarily more relevant or interesting to study those who are politically active. However, as mentioned, there is a gap in the literature on youth and politics regarding this group of youth. Thus, to understand Tunisia's future, it is important that politically active youth are given more in-depth attention. In addition, the analysis is based on a core assumption: if one wishes to find a way to get more youth active in Tunisian politics, an important starting point is to look at those who already are politically active. Several analyses have already pointed at why youth are *not* active in politics (see for example Boukhars 2015; Collins 2011; Marzouki and Meddeb 2015; Mekki 2014; Parker 2013; Silveira 2015). This is of course relevant, but not

⁶ The formulation "being politically active" implies that it is *politically active* Tunisian youth that are of interest here, as in the first sub-research question.

enough if the goal is to enhance political activity among youth. An important step is to fill the literary gap on the already existing political activity among Tunisian youth.

Why is it important that youth are included and participate in politics? In their volume on participation in America, Verba and Nie (1972: 1-5) point to several reasons for why political participation is important in general. First, it is at the heart of democratic theory and democracy in practice, as democracy is by definition the rule of the people. The more participation there is in decision-making, the more democracy there is. Second, participation is in a crucial relationship with other social and political goals, such as a sustainable resource allocation, by communicating the citizens' needs and desires to politicians. Third, it could also enhance the citizens' satisfaction, both with decision makers and politicians, and with their own role. Fourth, participation can have an educational element by learning the citizens 'civic virtues' such as responsibility.

Thus, the Tunisian democracy in itself could benefit greatly from heightened youth participation in politics. Before 2011 (and possibly still today), the MENA region had a reputation of being authoritarianism's stronghold. As Schmitter (1995: 21) puts it, "no other world region seems to have succeeded in building itself such a barrier against the post-1974 democratic tsunami". As now often stated, the Tunisian transition since 2011 has in many ways broken autocracy's hegemony in the region, even though it has yet failed to "export" this development. Tunisia is today the only Arab state in the region (and thus in the world) classified as "free" by Freedom House (Freedom House 2015; Lefèvre 2015; Stepan and Linz 2013). The revolutions of 2011 popularly known as "the Arab Spring" began in Tunisia, just as they only succeeded in Tunisia. The awarding of the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize to the now famous Tunisian "quartet" accentuated the importance of Tunisia as a beam of hope in an otherwise turbulent part of the world.

However, for this beam of hope to keep shining, it is necessary to include youth in politics to a higher degree. As Verba and Nie (1972: 1-5) argue, a democracy's legitimacy depends on including as many citizens as possible in decision-making; citizens must at least feel represented by those who make the decisions. It can be argued that youth will feel more represented by a person belonging to the same generation as them than by someone who is 50 years older. In addition, youth might be more prone to discussing issues that are especially relevant to youth, for example unemployment. According to Mekki (2014) and B'Chir (2013), there is a feeling among Tunisian youth, which probably is not far from the truth, that the old

elite politicians are not too preoccupied with the youth's problems; at least they do not prioritize finding solutions to these issues. This alienates the youth from politics, makes them lose faith in the power of democratic elections and democracy as a political system in general, and it does not inspire for political activity and participation. The 2014 World Bank report revealed that alarmingly 68 % of the urban youth and 91 % of the rural youth had no confidence in public institutions and the political system (Banque Mondiale 2014: 11).

It is not only the Tunisian democracy in itself that would benefit greatly from accentuated youth participation in politics. Political participation could have several positive effects for the society and the youth as well. For instance, Assad and Barsoum (2007: 29) argue that in the case of Egypt, civic participation among youth will facilitate collective action, yield more effective and better-targeted services, and reduce corruption by allowing for channels of accountability. Regarding the case of Tunisia, Mayssa Hamidi, researcher in political science, emphasizes the importance of implicating the youth in decision-making regarding issues that concern them, and give them the possibility to propose solutions that are convenient for their problems. The youth's participation in politics gives them the opportunity to share their respective experiences, their definitions, and their cultures. Through this group work, the youth will become more mature and experienced (Kefi 2014). As Laiq (2013: 37) argues regarding Egyptian and Tunisian youth,

“[t]he inclusion and empowerment of youth are fundamental elements of a meaningful political process. Engaging youth in formal politics promotes a sense of ownership, which in turn allows for the constructive channeling of grievances. It also creates the space for fresh and innovative policy ideas and the development of a new generation of political actors.”

What can happen if youth are not integrated? Importantly, a radicalization of the cohort may be a consequence of political marginalization (Packer 2016). Fuller (2003: 18) argues that there may be a case of direct connection between radicalism and youth, stating that in countries “where unemployment is high and radical political movements exist, large cohorts of youth from 18-24 years of age will be most directly affected by unemployment and will turn to radical political remedies” (ibid).

The increasing numbers of young Tunisians who are unemployed and who have lost confidence in public institutions and politics may then be more inclined to become radicalized and resort to violence, be it in the name of Islam or other ideologies (Haddaoui 2014; Packer

2016). As Boukhars (2015) puts it, “[t]his generation gap and the persistence of regional inequality and polarization fuel the political instability and violent extremism facing Tunisia”. Unfortunately, this hypothesis became reality three times in 2015 in Tunisia. On 18 March at least two young men attacked the Bardo museum in Tunis, killing 22 people (L’Express 2015). Then, on 26 June a 23-year-old man attacked the Riu Imperial Marhaba hotel near Sousse and killed 37 people (Abid 2015). Finally, on 24 November a 26-year-old man detonated a suicide bomb in a bus transporting members of the presidential security guard in Tunis, leaving 12 people dead (Le Monde 2015). The attackers were all young Tunisians. The year of 2016 has not been deprived of attacks either. On 7 March the small town of Ben Guerdane, close to the Libyan border, was attacked by jihadists claiming allegiance to the Islamic State (IS). Tunisian security forces managed to defeat the attackers, but the assault left 7 civilians, 13 militaries and at least 46 assailants dead (Ghorbal 2016). Additionally, the consequences of the radicalization of Tunisian youth are not only felt at home. Many young Tunisians have left to fight in Iraq, Syria and Libya, and some even estimate the number of Tunisian foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria to be as high as 6000⁷, making the Tunisians the by far largest cohort of foreign fighters (Packer 2016; The Soufan Group 2015: 15).

To sum up, it is important to give youth special attention when examining the future course of Tunisia, and the lack of scientific analyses regarding politically active youth begs for an in-depth study of this group. Additionally, such a study could shed light on how to get more youth active and included in politics, which is important both for the Tunisian democracy and for Tunisian youth themselves. However, before being able to do this, some key concepts inherent in the research questions need to be defined and delimited. The thesis’ definition and delimitation of the concepts “youth” and “political participation” will now be presented and discussed.

1.2 Defining and delimiting key concepts

1.2.1 Youth

⁷ The Soufan Group’s report *Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq*, published in December 2015.

*The youth is a gender, just like seniors, and women. The Constitution stipulates that the youth is an active force in the construction of the country.*⁸

Ibrahim Amri, researcher in political science, to *GlobalNet* (Kefi 2014)

Karl Mannheim's "theory of generations"⁹ from 1923 is regarded as a seminal work on generations as a sociological phenomenon, where he argues that generations are formed by specific historical events that they experience, which form their modes of behavior, thoughts and feelings. Generations thus share a socio-historical context, or a "generational location" which creates bonds between the members of this generation, and which shapes their narratives of the specific historical event(s) that formed it (Mannheim 1952: 290-303). Mannheim's definition of generation will be employed as a point of departure for defining "youth" in this thesis. In other words, the generation of Tunisian youth analyzed will be defined as a generation sharing a generational location, formed by the specific historical event that the 2011 revolution was.

Mannheim's definition of generations brings us over to Emma Murphy's definition of youth. In "Problematizing Arab Youth", Murphy points out the challenge "of identifying on whom the term [youth] might legitimately be conferred or what constitutes the set of interests and identities which enables 'youths' to cohere into a distinct sub-set of broader Arab societies" (Murphy 2012: 6). Murphy (ibid: 7-11) presents four ways of framing Arab youth: as a *demographic bulge*, related to the demographic pyramid of the Arab population which has become very unbalanced; as a *human resource issue*, including the failures of education to prepare youth for employment in the global economy, and the high levels of unemployment among youth; as a *state of transition to adulthood*, wherein Arab youth are depicted as in a stage of "waiting", because unemployment inhibits marriage and starting a family; and as a *constructed identity* or set of identities. This "youth-identity" is markedly reinforced by new communicative technologies such as social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube).

Employing these four framings, Murphy (2012: 15) presents a generational narrative of Arab youth: a social category "united not just by age but by shared experiences of political, economic and social exclusion", similarly to Mannheim's generational location. What brings

⁸ Translated from French by the author.

⁹ Pilcher (1994: 483) argues that "cohort" (or "social generation") would be a more accurate term to employ in this framework, as cohort is defined as "people within a delineated population who experience the same significant event within a given period of time", while "generation" refers to the relationship between parents and children. However, as Mannheim employs the term "generation", this will also be employed here, although the definition of cohort is the accurate definition of the object of study.

the Arab youth together is not so much age as it is a similarity of socio-historical context and experiences (ibid: 7). This is the definition of youth employed in this thesis. Instead of using the quantitative method of selecting relevant objects of study by a fixed age, the youth in this analysis are a group bound together by a shared identity as youth. Interestingly, in her study of youth activists in Egypt and Tunisia from 2013, Nur Laiq (2013) argues that

“within the context of the Arab Spring, activists tend not to base their youth identity on specific age brackets. Rather, they perceive themselves as a generation that has been through a rite of passage marked by a shared historical moment. They have a shared consciousness and a common narrative of change through which they self-identify as being part of a youth social movement” (Laiq 2013: 4-5).

Thus, the definition of youth employed in this thesis will not be delimited by age, but by the shared identity of belonging to the “youth generation”, with all the grievances and possibilities that entails, and as opposed to the older generations.

1.2.2 Political participation

Democracy as it was classically understood meant above all direct citizen participation; either democracy was participatory, or it was a sham (Dahl 1989: 226).

What is participation? Verba and Nie (1972: 2-3) define participation as “those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take”. They present four different modes of political participation: voting, campaign activity, cooperative activity, and citizen-initiated contacts (ibid: 46-48). The first two modes are connected with the electoral process, and only take place during elections, at scheduled times. The first mode represents the action of voting in elections. The second mode, campaign activity, involves “working for a party or a candidate, attending meetings, contributing money, and trying to convince others how they should vote” (ibid: 46). The third type of participation, cooperative activity, occurs outside the electoral process and involves groups or organizations made up by citizens who wish to deal with social and political problems. The fourth mode, citizen-initiated contacts, also occurs outside the electoral process, but refers to individuals with particular concerns who themselves initiate contact with government officials, instead of becoming a member of a group. The individual acts alone vis-à-vis the government, outside of the electoral process.

In this thesis, the modes of participation that will be analyzed are the second (campaign activity) and third (cooperative activity) modes, conceptualized by political activity in a political party and political activity in a civil society organization (CSO). There are several reasons for this. Firstly, voting behavior among Arab and Tunisian youth has already been the subject of several quantitative studies (see for example Hoffman and Jamal 2012; Hoffman and Jamal 2014), thus this thesis will prioritize territory that to a larger extent is unexplored. Second, one of the aims of the analysis is to analyze motivations for participation in depth. It is possible to assume that in general, citizens who are actively involved in politics through organizations and parties have clearer opinions about these topics than citizens who “only” vote in elections, and otherwise abstain from politics. To get a clearer and richer picture of what explains political activity, it is then more fruitful to only include political participation that demands a higher level of activity than voting.

Thirdly, the delimitation of the concept “youth” presented in the previous section favors a focus on group-based political action. The generational narrative of youth as a coherent, independent and unique group in society implies that there exists a group mentality within this cohort. This could of course be relevant for studies of voting behavior among youth as well. However, it could be argued that this group-mentality will be increasingly present and relevant when young citizens can meet and work *together* in organizations or parties. Thus, to get the full effect of this “youth-group-mentality” on political activity, it is more fruitful to analyze group-based political participation. This does not only exclude the first mode presented by Verba and Nie, voting, but also the fourth mode, citizen-initiated contacts. Only the second mode, campaign activity, and the third mode, cooperative activity, are group-based forms of political participation.

Fourth, several point to the alternative forms of participation that Tunisian youth employ to affect the political situation, through CSOs (civil society organizations) and SNSs (social networking sites) such as Facebook and Twitter (Parker 2013; Silveira 2015: 21-23). As Murphy (2012: 11) puts it, youth political activism is generally “manifested outside of the established formal political structures and long-established political parties”. This wave of youth CSOs is an interesting and new feature of the Tunisian transition, and therefore requires more attention.

To summarize, campaign activity and cooperative activity are the relevant modes of political participation for this thesis.¹⁰ Initially, campaign activity seems irrelevant for the thesis, as it is in Verba and Nie's definition only confined to the period of elections. However, this definition, which includes working for a party or a candidate, attending meetings, and trying to convince others how they should vote, seems to be a fitting description of some of the tasks members of parties have to address, also outside electoral periods. Thus, for the purpose of this thesis, the limitations on time that Verba and Nie have put on campaign activity will be lifted, and the term will be employed for partisan activities also outside electoral campaigns.

Other types of political participation that are not mentioned by Verba and Nie have been important among youth in Tunisia since 2011, such as demonstrations, sit-ins, and Internet-based participation such as blogs and social media. A relevant question to ask is thus whether Verba and Nie's definition and types of political participation fully capture political participation in Tunisia today. Participation in demonstrations and sit-ins is often ad hoc, and, just as voting in elections, does not necessarily in itself qualify for being politically active. Additionally, as mentioned, the effect of a possible "youth-group-mentality" is supposed to be easier to grasp when analyzing group-based political participation, excluding Internet-based participation. Therefore, although Verba and Nie's definition of political participation might not fully capture what political participation in Tunisia is today, it is satisfying for the purpose of this thesis.

The definition and delimitation of the key concepts "youth" and "political participation" employed in the analysis have now been presented and discussed. To complete the thesis' introduction, the next section outlines the structure of the thesis.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The reader has already discovered the first chapter, the introduction to the thesis, where the research questions were presented. The next step is to delimit the scope of the analysis and define which aspects of politically active youth's role in Tunisian politics, and of their motivations for participating in politics, to focus on in the analysis. Therefore, the thesis' theoretical framework will be presented and discussed in the next chapter, as well as existing

¹⁰ For other discussions regarding the importance of especially CSOs, but also political parties, when analyzing political participation in the democratic transitions following the 2011 Arab revolutions, see for instance Khatib (2013) and Martin (2015).

literature on youth and political participation in Tunisia. The chapter is structured in accordance with the two sub-research questions.

After defining and delimiting the scope of the analysis, it is necessary to explain what data the analysis has been based on, and how this data has been gathered. The third chapter thus presents the research design – case study – and the research method – semi-structured interviews – employed in the analysis.

When the research questions, theoretical approaches, and research design and method have been presented, the ground has been laid for a presentation and analysis of the findings from the interviews, which constitute the fourth and fifth chapter. The fourth chapter discusses the first sub-research question, regarding Tunisian youth's perceived role in politics. The fifth chapter discusses the second sub-research question, regarding Tunisian youth's motivations for being active in politics.

The sixth chapter concludes the thesis, with discussions related to the results of the analysis.

The following chapter will hence present the thesis' theoretical framework as well as existing literature on youth and political participation.

2 Theoretical perspectives and existing literature

In this chapter the theoretical framework employed in the analysis will be presented, as well as existing literature on youth and political participation in Tunisia. The chapter is structured in accordance with the two sub-research questions. To recall, the main research question is *what explains the continued political participation among a minority of Tunisia's youth?* To answer this, two sub-research questions have been formulated:

- What role do politically active youth believe they have in Tunisian politics?
- What are Tunisian youth's motivations for being politically active?

By examining different relevant theoretical perspectives and existing literature on youth and political participation in Tunisia (and in Arab countries), what may one expect the answers to these questions to be? This will now be discussed.

2.1 Politically active youth's role in Tunisian politics

As the political situation in Tunisia today is that of a transition from autocracy to democracy, democratic transition theory is employed to shed some light on what role one might expect youth to have in Tunisian politics today. In their four-volume study *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy in Latin America and Southern Europe*, published in 1986, Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead analyze transitions from authoritarian rule in Southern Europe and Latin America. In this study, they find that a decisive element in these transitions is the creation of "pacts" between "soft-liners" from the old, authoritarian regime, who have experienced a gradual awareness about the need for some form of electoral legitimation and the introduction of certain freedoms necessary for the survival of the regime, and moderates from the opposition to the authoritarian regime. Transitions are sparked by internal divisions within the old regime, usually between soft-liners and "hard-liners", the latter rejecting all forms of democracy and believing in the salience of authoritarianism. These internal divisions are then followed by negotiations and agreements on the exercise of power based on compromises between soft-liners from the old regime and moderates from the opposition, resulting in pacts (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986: 16-19, 37-39).

This alliance between soft-liners from the old regime and moderates from the opposition takes the form of a “cartel of party elites”, as political parties tend to be the important actors in the negotiation of pacts (ibid: 41). Importantly, O’Donnell and Schmitter (ibid: 37) define these pacts as “an explicit, but not always publicly explicated or justified, agreement among a select set of actors which seeks to define (or, better, to redefine) rules governing the exercise of power on the basis of mutual guarantees for the “vital interests” of those entering into it”. As the same authors point out,

“[i]ronically, such modern pacts move the polity towards democracy by undemocratic means. They are typically negotiated among a small number of participants representing established (and often highly oligarchical) groups or institutions; they tend to reduce competitiveness as well as conflict; they seek to limit accountability to wider publics; they attempt to control the agenda of policy concerns; and they deliberately distort the principle of citizen equality.” (ibid: 38).

These compromises, negotiated between already established elites, thus tend to exclude actors who are not seen as vital for the conservation of these elites’ positions and interests.

Similarly, the partners in the cartel of party elites promise each other to keep outsiders such as the military, the masses, hard-liners from the old regime and radicals from the opposition out of the transitional process (ibid: 39-44).

This in some ways resembles the Tunisian transition after the 2011 revolution. Truly, Tunisia’s break from authoritarianism was not launched by an internal division in the authoritarian regime’s elite, but rather by a nationwide popular upsurge against the regime, sparked by the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in the town of Sidi Bouzid on 17 December 2010 (Brynen et al. 2012: 17). However, once former president Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia 14 January 2011, the Tunisian transition began to resemble transition theory’s narrative. The Tunisian political scene has since the constitution drafting process began in late 2011 been dominated by the moderate Islamist political party Ennahda on one side and secular political parties on the other side, assembled in the party Nidaa Tounes in 2012.

Ennahda could be regarded as moderates from the opposition to the old regime. The party was in opposition to the regimes of both Habib Bourguiba, the first president after Tunisia’s independence, and his successor Ben Ali, leading to fierce repression and imprisonment of a large number of Ennahda’s adherents especially after 1989 (Beau and Lagarde 2014: 73-74). On the Tunisian Islamist political scene, they are moderate compared to the Salafist political

parties such as Jabhat Al Islah (the Reform Front Party). According to Marks (2015a: 2-9), on the regional Islamist political scene, Ennahda choose to compare themselves to the “modern” and “democratically credible” Turkish AK Parti (Justice and Development Party) rather than the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, who they regard as too backward. Nidaa Tounes on their side could be regarded as soft-liners from the old regime, as, according to Boukhars (2015) and Marzouki & Meddeb (2015) more than half of Nidaa Tounes’ parliamentarians after the general elections in 2014 were actively involved in Ben Ali’s political party Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique (RCD). Boukhars (2015) also argues that many regard Nidaa Tounes as an “incarnation of [the] conflicting desire to reunite the old social template with present aspirations for change”.

Ennahda got a relative majority (35 %) of the votes in the elections to the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) in October 2011, and formed the “Troïka” government with two secular parties, Congrès pour la République (CPR) and Ettakatol (Beau and Lagarde 2014: 54-56). However, Ennahda rapidly emerged as the prime political power, controlling most decision-making and limiting power-sharing with its partners in the Troïka (ibid: 70; Boubekeur 2016: 114). Soon, Ennahda also started to marginalize own members who were not convinced by the leadership’s cooperation with the “old guard”, who would soon become Nidaa Tounes (Beau and Lagarde 2014: 102; Boukhars 2015; Brynen et al. 2012: 18-21). Then, in 2014, Nidaa Tounes got most votes in the parliamentary (85 out of 217 seats) and presidential elections, and, although Nidaa Tounes was created with the main purpose of countering Ennahda as a political force, Ennahda was included in the new government and was given one ministerial post (minister of employment) and three secretary of state posts (Boubekeur 2016: 119; Boukhars 2015; Marks 2015b). Consensus building between moderates from the old opposition – Ennahda – and soft liners from the old regime – Nidaa Tounes – has in other words characterized the transitional process in Tunisia since late 2011.¹¹

This overview indicates that the Tunisian transition from autocracy to democracy could be regarded as a case of the “pacted transition” that O’Donnell and Schmitter present in their

¹¹ Stepan and Linz (2013: 23) argue that seculars and Islamists began meeting regularly *before* Ben Ali’s fall to overcome fears and suspicions against each other and “craft the “rules of the game” for a democratic alternative”, which resulted in “highly innovative pacts”. According to Stepan and Linz, this contributed to the success of the Tunisian transition, contrasted with the Egyptian case where nothing similar to this happened (Stepan 2012: 95-97; ibid: 23-24). However, the seculars participating in these meetings in 2003 and 2005 belonged to leftist parties who were in opposition to Ben Ali’s regime, and are thus not a part of the soft-liners as defined by transition theory (Beau and Lagarde 2014: 74).

theory. If this is the case, all other political forces than the leaderships of Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes, and the actors that can guarantee their interests, should be distanced from the transitional process and the political scene. This supports the claim briefly presented in the introduction, that Tunisian youth are excluded from politics. Thus, with regard to what role Tunisian politically active youth believe they have in politics, one could expect them to feel excluded from politics by the Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes leaderships.¹²

However, some argue that the Tunisian transition *cannot* be regarded as a case of “pacted transition”. Amel Boubekeur (2016: 108) argues that “[i]n Tunisia, Islamist and old regime elite interactions have been shaping a political culture that I call ‘bargained competition’”. Much like transition theory predicts, Islamists and old regime actors seek a bargain “on their mutual reintegration into the political order and thus become the central players on the post-revolutionary political scene” (ibid). At the same time, however, Islamist and old regime elites are kept in a state of prolonged and intense competition over political resources, due to the fear of being dominated and repressed by the other side. Thus, the transitional negotiations between old elites and the moderate opposition have not led to a reduction of conflict, as transition theory predicts. Furthermore, Boubekeur argues that the Tunisian situation differs from a pacted transition because in Tunisia “the almost total absence of Ennahda leaders in the protests of December 2010 and January 2011 and the collaboration of Ben Ali’s own power apparatus in his ousting have blurred the lines between who should be credited for the revolution and who should be held accountable for the dictatorship” (ibid). In a pacted transition process, however, it is a negotiated process between distinct ruling and opposition blocs that provide for the liberalization and democratization of the political sphere.

I. William Zartman presents a similar argument in his work *Arab Spring: Negotiating in the Shadow of the Intifadat* (2015). He argues that “[t]he parties and even the sides that characterized transitional pacts are absent or inchoate in the current revolts”, as the uprisings were incoherent, leaving no clear sides to be represented in a pact (Zartman 2015: 9). Instead, Zartman argues, Tunisia’s transition was that of a “competing system”; a multiparty system where a number of parties are involved and no one has enough seats in parliament to rule alone (ibid: 25-26). The Tunisian political scene has since 2011 been characterized by a

¹² For more discussions (and critics) regarding transition theory, see for instance O’Donnell (2002), Carothers (2002), Harriss et al. (2004), and Törnquist (2013). For literature on transition theory’s application on other cases from the Arab world, see Stepan (2012) or Brumberg (2014).

“dominant” (but not majoritarian) Ennahda and an array of smaller secular parties and coalitions, among which some came together in Nidaa Tounes in 2012 (ibid: 58).

This competing system became apparent during the constitution drafting process, especially by mid-2013. Although it could be argued that the Tunisian political scene since 2012 has been dominated by Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes, the constitution drafting process from late 2011 to early 2014 was characterized by conflict rather than by orderly and peaceful pacted negotiations between Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes. Increasingly, the constitution drafting process was according to Ben Hafaiedh and Zartman regarded as “a ragged process, where controversial issues long lay lost on the table without finding a solution, so that by mid-2013 the whole political system rose in revolt over its delays and directions” (Ben Hafaiedh and Zartman 2015: 67). Furthermore, they argue that “[t]he vocal, if uncoordinated, liberal opposition issued increasingly shrill attacks on the ANC [NCA] and the entire process” (ibid).

As a result, the National Dialogue Quartet was launched in September 2013 by the CSOs UGTT (Tunisian General Labor Union), UTICA (the Tunisian union of industry, trade and handicrafts), the Tunisian Order of Lawyers, and LTDH (the Tunisian Human Rights League)¹³. The civil society actors issued a Roadmap for “the Resolution of the Political Crisis”, and assembled actors from the main CSOs and political parties to broad negotiations aimed at creating a consensus to solve the political crisis (Beau and Lagarde 2014: 120; ibid: 68). After four months of negotiations led by the National Dialogue Quartet, the Constitution was finally passed in January 2014. According to Ben Hafaiedh and Zartman, the negotiations went between the Troïka government and Nidaa Tounes, but also between the official institutions and the National Dialogue Quartet, and between the NCA and the popular sit-ins outside their offices in the parliament (Ben Hafaiedh and Zartman 2015: 68). This suggests that also other political, civil and popular forces, in addition to soft-liners from the old regime and moderates from the opposition to the old regime, influenced the negotiations to the Constitution, contrary to what transition theory would predict.

Another element that weakens the argument of the Tunisian transition being a pacted transition is the composition of Nidaa Tounes. As mentioned, more than half of Nidaa Tounes’ parliamentarians after the general elections in 2014 were actively involved in the

¹³ These acronyms are based on the French names of the organizations, which are Union générale tunisienne du travail (UGTT), Union tunisienne de l’industrie, du commerce et de l’artisanat (UTICA), and Ligue tunisienne des droits de l’homme (LTDH).

RCD (Ben Ali's political party). This implies that the other half of Nidaa Tounes was *not* involved in the RCD. Rather, they were mainly leftists who had been a part of the opposition to the Ben Ali regime (ibid: 72; Beau and Lagarde 2014: 91-92). The pluralist nature of this coalition, without any common overarching ideology uniting the different factions, has proven increasingly challenging. During the first months of 2016, Nidaa Tounes was rocked by a split between two factions within the party. The factions were led by Hafedh Caid Essebsi, the founder of the party Beji Caid Essebsi's son, and Mohsen Marzouk, former Secretary General. Mohsen Marzouk's faction chose to split from Nidaa Tounes and created a new bloc in the parliament (Marzouk 2016). As of April 2016, Nidaa Tounes had lost 30 seats in the parliament, now counting only 56 seats, while Marzouk's coalition Al Horra counted 28 seats. Ennahda is therefore again the largest party in the parliament, with 69 seats (Le Temps 2016). This illustrates the very pluralist nature of Nidaa Tounes, and challenges the assumption that Nidaa Tounes, at least up until the split in early 2016, represented only soft-liners from the old regime.

It is in other words challenging to assert whether the Tunisian case can be regarded as a case of a pacted transition à la O'Donnell and Schmitter. This in turn makes it difficult to assert youth's role in Tunisian politics, especially whether they are excluded or not, since one can assume that youth are excluded from politics by political elites only if the Tunisian transition is in fact a pacted transition. What role does existing literature on the topic believe politically active youth to have in Tunisian politics? Some of its arguments were presented in the introduction. Here, existing literature on Tunisian youth and political participation will be presented more in depth.

First of all, most of the relevant literature supports the claim presented in the introduction chapter that youth were interested and wished to participate in politics during and right after the revolution, but that this desire relatively quickly gave way to a disappointment and alienation from politics. In a statistical analysis of political attitudes among youth cohorts with data from the Arab Barometer's second wave¹⁴, Hoffman and Jamal (2014) (see also Hoffman and Jamal 2012) found that the youngest cohort (18-24 years) in Tunisia and Egypt were "substantially more likely than other citizens to participate in the Arab spring protests" (ibid: 289). In March 2011, National Democratic Institute (NDI) conducted an analysis of thoughts and perspectives among young Tunisian men and women (Collins 2011). Among the

¹⁴ Fielded in Tunisia in April 2011 and in Egypt in July 2011.

main findings was that the youth interviewed had a genuine desire to participate in the democratic transition, but that they were skeptical about available channels as well as certain individuals and political parties, fearing that these would profit from the revolution for personal gains (ibid: 5). The report claims that “[y]oung Tunisians do not trust the country’s political elites” (ibid: 10). Without arguing that political elites exclude youth from politics, this claim indicates that there is a gap between youth and older politicians in Tunisia, in line with transition theory.

This is reinforced by the argument that the desire to participate in the democratic transition soon began to fade. The 2014 World Bank report on the inclusion of youth in Tunisia found that very few young Tunisians are politically active in any form, except for mobilization through demonstrations. Few vote, few are members of political parties or active in civil society, and few have any significant knowledge of Tunisian politics (Banque Mondiale 2014: 11-19). This is clearly in line with the claim that Tunisian youth are not politically active. But are the older political elites at fault?

The World Bank argues in its report that this exclusion of youth from politics necessarily creates mistrust towards public institutions, as well as towards the police and the press (ibid: 19). Silveira (2015) highlights in her article “Youth as Political Actors after the “Arab Spring””: The Case of Tunisia” the weak representation of youth in politics in Tunisia, which has led to an alienation and mistrust among youth towards politics and politicians (Silveira 2015: 19-20). Similarly, Boukhars (2015) emphasizes the generation gap he believes divides Tunisia, leading to unemployed and alienated youth while old faces and old methods dominate politics. In other words, the existing literature also supports transition theory’s claim that Tunisian youth are excluded from politics while older elites have taken the lead of the political transition.

Monica Marks (2013) discusses youth politics through Salafism, a current that has grown rapidly since the 2011 revolution. Marks argue that the Tunisian Salafist youth “identify overwhelmingly as Salafiyeen Jihadiyeen (jihadi Salafists)” (Marks 2013: 109), a current of Salafism that reject even the institutionalization of party politics. One of the factors Marks points to as an explanation for the popularity this current has among Tunisian youth is the feeling of negligence and disappointment the political leaders of Tunisia have created among the youth, as well as the lack of inclusion of young members in decision-making processes and guiding bodies (ibid: 110). Consequently, the youth organize in alternative arenas, either

CSOs or jihadi Salafi networks (ibid: 111). This also supports the argument that there exists a gap between political leaders and youth in Tunisia, and that the latter feel neglected and bypassed by political elites.

This argument is also supported by Laurent Bonnefoy's (2014) short analysis discussing the term or concept "Arab youth" or shabab al-thawra (revolutionary youth). Bonnefoy argues that a "stolen revolution" narrative has become dominant since the spring of 2011, claiming that

"revolutionary street mobilisation allegedly initiated by the "revolutionary youth" has been massively appropriated (some claim "stolen" or "confiscated") by institutionalized actors, particularly political parties that pre-existed the revolutionary processes (primarily the Muslim Brotherhood) and also by the military, all of which are controlled by actors that are far from young" (Bonnefoy 2014: 2).

Tunisia is one example that reflects this narrative, where Bonnefoy claims that the youth have been unable to determine the outcomes of the uprising they launched. Instead, he argues that they have been systematically sidelined in the transition process and marginalized in elections (ibid).

This overview demonstrates that existing literature seems to support the claim that Tunisian youth are excluded from politics. However, this does not provide much information on politically *active* youth, and whether they feel excluded from politics. As the theoretical contributions make it challenging to assert whether the Tunisian transition is a pacted transition, where the politically active youth are excluded from politics by political leaders, it is difficult to formulate any expectations or assumptions regarding politically active youth's role in Tunisian politics today, and thus the answer to the first sub-research question. This makes it increasingly interesting and necessary to analyze and discuss what role politically active youth believe they have in Tunisian politics today, and especially whether they feel or regard themselves (and other youth) as excluded from politics. Thus, the first part of the analysis will attempt at this, without any pre-formulated assumptions guiding the analysis.

2.2 Motivations for political participation among youth

Motivations for political participation are here thought to comprise issues or topics that are of greatest importance, in addition to motivations in a general manner, such as ideological or economic.

Here, the Tunisian transition will be regarded as a case of a pacted transition, despite the challenges related to this that were outlined in the previous section. This is done first and foremost as a starting point to structure the analysis of youth's motivations. According to transition theory and O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986: 42), non-elite actors who wish to influence the political scene will usually cut across existing traditional cleavages. In Tunisia, it is the Islamist-secular cleavage that structures the political scene, as Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes represent the Islamist and secular blocks respectively. As Tunisian youth are in transition theory's terms non-elite, they should cut across existing traditional cleavages. Murphy's definition of Arab youth employed in the definition of youth supports this claim, as her generational narrative of the Arab youth implies that youth is "a constructed identity [that] cuts across a range of other ideological, ethnic, sectarian, gender, class and national identities" (Murphy 2012: 14). According to her, "youth activists continue to reject the impermeable ideological boundaries of the previous generations" (ibid: 18). Based on this, a hypothesis can be formulated:

Hypothesis 1: Youth are politically active to work for issues that cut across the Islamist-secular cleavage.

Existing literature is not unanimous in its support for this hypothesis. Certainly, the NDI study of Tunisian youth found that the economy was the main concern for young Tunisians, especially unemployment (Collins 2011: 8). Similarly, Laiq (2013: 23, 33) found that among youth activists, social and economic justice was one of the key demands of the revolution. On the other hand, the Arab Barometer analysis found that Islamism seems to preoccupy Arab youth to a relatively high degree (Hoffman and Jamal 2014: 277-280). Regarding politically active Tunisian youth, Laiq (2013: 22) found that a majority of youth activists identify themselves as Muslim. However, she argues that the ideas and narratives of youth activists reflect "the deep identity crisis that Tunisian society is going through". Youth activists are separated in two camps: those who regard firm secularism as the solution, and those who advocate political Islam. Interestingly, she finds that this divide does not necessarily correlate to opposing or supporting Ennahda (ibid: 21).

Sawyer French (2015) has conducted an analysis of young Islamists'¹⁵ assessments of Ennahda's policies and compromises in the Tunisian transition. Generally, French found that young (moderate) Islamists he interviewed were more angered by Ennahda's compromises on "revolutionary" issues such as the decision not to exclude old regime figures from political participation, rather than by the party's compromises on religious issues such as the omission of the word "sharia" in the constitution (French 2015: 2, 14). Nevertheless, many young Islamists were angered by Ennahda's decision to enter a government led by Nidaa Tounes. However, French emphasizes that the "problem" with Nidaa Tounes for these young Islamists was not that the party is secular, but that it represents the old regime (ibid: 21-22).

On his side, Raphaël Lefèvre (2015) argues that the low electoral turnout of youth in the 2014 elections was due to a disappointment with politics that particularly affects the Islamist youth. When exploring which issues that were especially important for creating a rift between Ennahda's "pragmatic politicians and the base mostly made up of young and idealistic sympathisers", Lefèvre emphasizes the issue of including members of the old regime in the political process, just as French. However, he argues that the issue of sharia in the constitution was equally important in alienating the Islamist youth, implying that religious issues are as important for Islamist youth as revolutionary issues (Lefèvre 2015: 309). Furthermore, he argues that with Nidaa Tounes' electoral victories in 2014, the Islamist youth's disappointment with politics could turn into a "much more vocal rejection of the country's entire political system" (ibid), resulting in a radicalization of Islamist youth due to the enhanced polarization along the Islamist-secular cleavage. Marks (2013) article on youth politics through Salafism to some extent supports this claim. A majority of Salafists did not vote in the NCA elections in October 2011, but those who did usually voted for Ennahda. However, this party has now lost almost all credibility among Salafi youth, leading to a general alienation from and loss of confidence in politics among Salafi youth, resembling the situation among the cohort as a whole (Marks 2013: 109).

Thus, existing literature is divided on the issue of the Islamist-secular cleavage and its importance for Tunisian politically active youth. Some authors, such as Lefèvre (2015) and Marks (2013), accentuate the importance of the issue of Islamism for politically active youth, especially Islamist youth. This contradicts hypothesis 1. Other authors, such as French (2015)

¹⁵ It is important to note here that Salafists are not included in French's analysis, and that the assessments might be different among this group of young Islamists (see Marks 2013).

and Laiq (2013), emphasize other issues such as “revolutionary goals” and the economy as important for politically active youth, and thus support hypothesis 1. This division in the existing literature makes this analysis increasingly interesting and necessary.

However, people can have other motivations for being politically active than to fight for specific issues or causes. In their article “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory” from 1977, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald present what was to be known as the resource mobilization perspective of social movement theory. Here, they argue that this perspective “adopts as one of its underlying problems Olson’s (1965) challenge: since social movements deliver collective goods, few individuals will “on their own” bear the costs of working to obtain them” (McCarthy and Zald 1977: 1216). The underlying problem they are referring to, the free rider problem, was presented by Mancur Olson in his publication *The Logic of Collective Action* from 1965, which presented the rational choice approach to collective action. Because these two perspectives employ the same underlying problem, they will here be treated as one coherent approach to incentives for political participation.

As already made clear, the free rider problem is thought to affect incentives for mobilization and collective action decisively. The free rider problem is defined as the difficulties associated with getting people to bear the costs of acquiring goods when *all* benefit from the goods once they are acquired, also those who did not participate in the effort of acquiring them (known as public goods). McCarthy and Zald (1977: 1216) emphasize the importance of cost-reducing mechanisms and structures, and career benefits that lead to collective behavior. Importantly, they argue that those they label “supporters” or “constituents” – those who provide resources such as money, facilities, or labor – may have no commitment to or belief in the values that underlie specific movements (ibid: 1216, 1221). The emphasis on ideology as an incentive for participation is reduced, and actors participating in collective action are regarded as “rational actors”.

The rational choice perspective takes this argument of individuals participating in collective action being rational actors a step further. Olson (1965: 51, 60-61) argues that one of the possible solutions to the free rider problem is to put forward other incentives to mobilize, other than those incentives that are found in the public good itself. This is what he calls selective incentives, which are usually private, in contrast to the collectivity characterizing public goods (Hardin 1982: 31, Olson 1965: ibid). In one of his contributions to this

perspective, Russell Hardin (1982) points to selective incentives such as *friendships*, *company*, the sense of *belonging*, improved *self-image* or *status*, and *solidarity* as important incentives for mobilization (Hardin 1982: 32-33; Seippel 2003: 187-188). Hardin (1982: 35) also emphasizes the importance of *career* as a private interest explaining why people participate in collective efforts to acquire public goods. These incentives are “by-products” of participating in collective action, and are thought to be an alternative explanation for political participation, in addition to ideological incentives associated with the values and objectives of the organization one is a member of.¹⁶¹⁷

Based on this theoretical perspective, a second hypothesis can be formulated:

*Hypothesis 2: Youth are politically active because of the personal gains they acquire from political activity.*¹⁸

To sum up, the two hypotheses just presented indicate that both *issues cutting across the Islamist-secular cleavage* and *personal gains* are expected to motivate Tunisian youth to be politically active. However, empirical analyses are of course necessary to give more accurate answers to both the overarching research question and the sub-research questions, and perhaps problematize the initial assumptions. This need is accentuated by the fact that neither theoretical contributions nor existing literature clarify what role one can expect Tunisian politically active youth to have in politics today. The next chapter will demonstrate how the thesis will attempt at such an analysis, with discussions regarding research design and research method.

¹⁶ It must be noted that Hardin also argues for the importance of “extrarational motivations” for large-scale collective action, such as moral motives, self-realization and -development (which could be classified as self-interest as well), and even ignorance, lack of information, or misunderstandings (Hardin 1982: 103-112; Seippel 2003: 188). However, these are not included in the theoretical framework of the analysis.

¹⁷ For critics of the resource mobilization perspective of social movement theory, see for example Buechler (1995) or Offé (1985).

¹⁸ The existing literature on Tunisian youth and political participation does not discuss the issue of personal gains as a motivational factor. Thus, the relation between hypothesis 2 and existing literature will not be discussed, as it was with hypothesis 1.

3 Research design and method

What kind of data has the analysis been based on? How has this data been gathered? In this chapter, the research design – case study – and research method – semi-structured interviews – will be presented, followed by a discussion regarding the implications this design and method may have on the analysis’ validity and reliability.

3.1 The case

First of all, what is a case? Scholars have presented several definitions of this term: “a spatially limited phenomenon (a unit) observed at a single point in time or over some period of time” (Gerring 2007: 19), or “an instance of a class of events” (George and Bennett 2005: 17). Second, what is a case study? Gerring argues that a case study “may be understood as the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is – at least in part – to shed light on a larger class of cases (a population)” (Gerring 2007: 20). George and Bennett (2005: 5) relax the demand for generalization, defining a case study as “the detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to develop or test historical explanations that may be generalizable to other events”.

The case studied in the analysis is a group of 20 young politically active Tunisians, constructed for the purpose of this thesis. As discussed when defining and delimiting the concept “political participation” in the introduction, this thesis will focus on political participation among Tunisian youth through the participatory modes of cooperative activity (CSOs) and campaign activity (political parties). Thus, these 20 individuals were members of different political parties or CSOs. Importantly, it is the group as a whole that is the object of study. The group is a case of politically active youth in Tunisia, which is the population the results of the analysis are thought to say something about (Gerring 2007: 21-22; Levy 2008: 2).

How were the 20 individuals selected? The purpose of the analysis will decide which sampling method to use. This is a preliminary study of a topic that has not undergone extensive research prior to this analysis, and the *primary* goal of the analysis is therefore not to present results that can be generalizable to the population – all Tunisian politically active youth. Rather, the primary purpose is to study *in depth* a group of politically active Tunisian

youth that represents different types of political organizations and ideological currents, to be able to present a first tentative overview of politically active youth in Tunisia. This study can then in turn be employed as a starting point for analyses with stronger ambitions regarding generalization. To be able to construct such a group, and to avoid nonresponse bias, the sampling process had to be controlled and guided. Therefore, non-probability sampling was chosen to select respondents: by letting the researcher's judgements play a role in the selection of the sample, specific units of the population can be selected (Beyers et al. 2014: 181-182; Goldstein 2002: 669-670; Lynch 2013: 41; Tansey 2007: 768).

A combination of purposive sampling, snowball sampling, and convenience sampling¹⁹ were used to gather respondents²⁰. The first step in the analysis' sampling process was to identify which political parties and CSOs to analyze. Among political parties, Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes were indispensable, as they at the time of the sampling process were the two largest parties in the parliament. Among other, smaller parties, Afek Tounes and the secular leftist party Front Populaire were initially chosen, because they were the 4th and 5th largest blocs in the parliament, and because they represent different political currents. However, it proved impossible to find any young members of Front Populaire who had the possibility to be interviewed. As for CSOs, a combination of purposiveness – youth organizations were especially targeted – and knowledge of existing CSOs were decisive when identifying the initial sample, which included I Watch, Al Bawsala, Jeunes Indépendants Démocrates (JID) and Sawty. When in Tunis, Jasmine Foundation was added to the sample through snowball sampling, as it proved impossible to interview as many respondents from the four other associations as desired.

As for the respondents themselves, the research question and hypotheses do not require individuals with specific positions. Thus, convenience sampling was used to get an interview with the first respondents, followed by snowball sampling where the first respondents suggested other relevant respondents, either from their own party or organization, or from other parties and organizations. Contact was made with the respondents via mail or Facebook. It is important to note that even though convenience sampling was used, two control variables

¹⁹ The terms used to describe these types of non-probability sampling vary some. Here, Tansey's (2007) and Lynch's (2013) terms are used. Other authors cited here, such as Bryman (2012: 419), use different terms.

²⁰ Purposive sampling is when the researcher's knowledge of the population and the study's purpose guide the selection process. Snowball sampling is when an initial set of respondents is identified, and these respondents then suggest other respondents who are relevant for the study. Convenience sampling occurs when the most readily available respondents are selected (Lynch 2013: 41; Tansey 2007: 770).

laid some restrictions on the selection of respondents with regard to sex and area of residence (rural/urban). The final sample had 20 respondents, including:

- three members of I Watch (one woman, two men)
- two members of Al Bawsala (one woman, one man)
- one member of JID (one man)
- one member of Sawty (one man)
- two members of Jasmine Foundation (two woman)
- four members of Ennahda (one woman, three men)
- three members of Nidaa Tounes (two women, one man), and
- four members of Afek Tounes (two women, two men).

The respondents were between 23 and 38 years old, a great majority (16 out of 20) between 26 and 30.

The different CSOs and political parties will only be very briefly presented here, as it is the group of politically active youth as a whole that is of most interest for the analysis.

I Watch Tunisia is a watchdog organization, created after the revolution by a group of Tunisians between 22 and 25 years old. I Watch works with issues such as corruption, accountability, transparency and human rights, as well as empowerment of youth (I Watch Organization 2015; Parker 2013). Al Bawsala was created after the revolution by young Tunisians to monitor the NCA (Parker 2013). The CSO has now taken a more informative role. For instance, the organization has created a webpage where the profiles of the politicians running in the elections are posted to help young Tunisians make more informed decisions when voting (Al-Bawsala 2015; Silveira 2015: 22). Jeunes Indépendants Démocrates Tunisie (JID) also aims at informing youth about politics and politicians in their country. They focus more on less politically active youth, by for instance helping them find a political party they can relate to and vote for (JIDTunisie; Silveira 2015: 22). Sawty is a youth CSO founded right after the revolution. Its main mission is to accompany the Tunisian youth through the phase of democratic transition. Sawty's goal is to initiate the youth to become active in civil life, with the ultimate objective to acquire universal democratic values (Jamaity 2015). Jasmine Foundation is, contrarily to the four other CSOs in the analysis, not a youth organization. It

was founded in 2013 as a multidisciplinary research institute, and its mission is to contribute to the construction of the foundations of an emerging democratic society in Tunisia through mobilizing knowledge in human, social and political sciences, and through the public debate (Jasmine Foundation 2015: 2).

Ennahda is a Tunisian moderate Islamist political party, founded in 1981 as Mouvement de la tendance islamique (The Movement of Islamic Tendency), taking the name Ennahda in 1989 (Beau and Lagarde 2014: 73). In the elections to the NCA in October 2011, the party won a relative majority of the seats (Brynen et al. 2012: 21). During the constitution drafting process, conflict rose between Ennahda and the other political parties on several issues, especially regarding gender equality, the role of Islam and sharia in politics and the state, and type of government (Meyer-Resende and Weichselbaum 2014). In the parliamentary elections in October 2014 Ennahda lost its majority, but still remains an important political force. The party was for instance included in the government that was formed in February 2015, headed by Habib Essid, where they were given one ministerial post (minister of employment) and three secretary of state posts (Boukhars 2015; Marks 2015b; Mecham 2014: 202-203; Mouvement Ennahdha 2015; Teyeb 2011).²¹ Nidaa Tounes (Call of Tunisia) is a Tunisian secular centre-right political party, or coalition of parties, founded in 2012 by Beji Caid Essebsi. The party won a relative majority of the seats in the elections to the parliament in October 2014, while Essebsi won the presidential elections in November and December 2014 (Nidaa Tounes 2014). Late 2015 and early 2016, Nidaa Tounes was marked by a fierce internal conflict, mainly between Hamed Caid Essebsi, the founder's son, and Mohsen Marzouk, former Secretary General, leading to tens of resignations and the creation of a new bloc in the parliament (Marzouk 2016).²² Afek Tounes (Tunisian Aspiration) is a center-right party, labelling itself social-liberal. It was founded in 2011 in the aftermath of the revolution, and joined a coalition of other secularist and liberal parties, called Al Joumhouri, in spring 2012. In August 2013 previous members of Afek Tounes left the coalition to revive the party, and Afek Tounes won eight seats in the parliamentary elections in October 2014, becoming the fifth largest party in the parliament (The Guardian 2014). In their program, Afek Tounes

²¹ For a detailed overview of Ennahda's objectives, visit: <http://www.ennahdha.fr/le-parti/objectifs-et-moyens/>. For news articles on Ennahda youth, see Rebhi (2012) and Gnet (2012).

²² For a detailed overview of Nidaa Tounes' objectives, visit: <http://nidaatounes.org/ancien/findex.php?inc=detail&a=83>

accentuate their social and economic vision, believing strongly in the liberalization of the latter (Afek Tounes 2014).²³

Now that the research design and its case have been presented, the analysis' research method – semi-structured interviews – can be examined.

3.2 Semi-structured interviews

To gather data for the analysis, semi-structured interviews with 20 young politically active Tunisians were conducted during a three-week fieldtrip in Tunis, the capital of Tunisia, in December 2015. In this section, semi-structured interviews as a research method will be briefly presented, followed by a discussion of why this research method was chosen for the analysis. In addition, how the interviews were conducted will be outlined.

What is a semi-structured interview? Bryman's description of questions asked in semi-structured interviews serves as a valid definition: "The researcher has a list of questions or fairly specific topics to be covered, often referred to as an interview guide, but the interviewee has a great deal of leeway in how to reply." (Bryman 2012: 471). The questions may not be asked in the exact same order, and probes may be employed, but, by and large, all questions will be asked and in a similar wording. As Leech et al. (2013: 210) put it, semi-structured interview "strikes a middle ground between the formal standardization of the mass survey and the informant-led anarchy that ethnographic interviewing can sometimes result in".

Why was interviewing employed to gather data for the analysis? As the research questions suggest, the main object of interest is Tunisian politically active youth's opinions and thoughts on their role in politics and motivations for being politically active. As discussed, little has been written on this topic, implying that to be able to answer the research questions, primary data had to be gathered. Primary data that exists in the form of documents, such as programs, strategies or statements on different issues, reflect the opinion of the party or organization as a whole. Since the object of interest in this case is the personal opinion of politically active youth, personal interview was the most fruitful methodical approach. As Aberbach and Rockman (2002: 673) put it, "interviewing is often important if one needs to know what a set of people think, or how they interpret an event or series of events". Interview

²³ For a detailed overview of Afek Tounes' objectives, visit: http://www.afektounes.tn/Fr/pr--sentation_11_41.

was therefore chosen as method to gather primary data because of the purpose of the study: to gather information on a set of people's opinion on specific topics. Existing literature on the topic will be employed to complement and corroborate the interviews. However, the analysis will to a high degree be based on data from the interviews.

Why should the interviews be semi-structured? Tansey (2007: 766) argues that when interviews are employed to establish what a set of people think, the format of the interview should allow the researcher to "probe respondents at length regarding their thoughts on key issues relevant to the research project". That way, the respondents' thoughts and attitudes on central issues can be explored in rich detail. This is clearly an aim of the analysis, where the politically active youth's thoughts on their role in politics and motivations for political participation are to be explored in detail.

Aberbach and Rockman (2002: 674) define three major considerations in deciding whether to have open-ended questions or close-ended questions in interviews: the degree of prior research on the subject of concern, maximization of response validity, and the receptivity of the respondents. As discussed, not much research has been conducted on the subject of this analysis. Response validity means that the respondents are given the opportunity to organize their answers in their own frameworks, important when subjective issues are analyzed. Finally, respondents with strong opinions and a need to express them – politically active people will often belong to this category – will prefer to talk freely and not be locked in close-ended questions. They might also question the choice of wordings or alternatives that the researcher has chosen. These aspects point to semi-structured interview as the most fruitful research method for this analysis.

The interviews began with a brief presentation of the project, followed by some introductory questions related to age, duration of membership in the party/CSO and position. The interview guide, which can be found in the appendix, only comprised three main questions that were asked all the respondents: "describe your place in Tunisia today", "what are your motivations for being politically active", and "describe how you wish for Tunisia to be in five years". In addition, the respondents were probed on several topics if they did not mention and discuss them by themselves. In relation to the question "describe your place in Tunisia today" the respondents were probed on how this place had changed since 2011, their relation to other actors, and disinterest in politics among Tunisian youth in general. If the respondent mentioned being included or excluded, she was also asked follow-up questions on this. With

regard to the question “what are your motivations for being politically active” the respondents were probed on why they had become a member of this specific party or CSO, whether their motivations had changed since 2011, and what issues were of most importance to them. The questions and the probes will be further discussed in the next section, in relation to construct validity. The interviews were concluded by asking the respondent whether he or she had something to add to the topic (Woliver 2002: 678).

The interviews were conducted either in cafés/restaurants or at the offices of the party or CSO. The interviews were conducted in French (except for two cases where the respondents preferred to speak English), which caused no problems as French is the second language in Tunisia, and thus was spoken fluently by both parties. Before beginning the interview, the respondents were asked to read and sign an information and consent form (to be found in the appendix), as well as indicate what kind of information about them (name, gender, age, position in party/CSO) that could be published in the thesis. All the interviews were recorded and then transcribed before analyzing the content, except for one where the respondent preferred that only notes should be taken. This process will be discussed in the next section in relation to reliability.

In the following section, the analysis’ construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability will be discussed.

3.3 Validity and reliability²⁴

The construct validity²⁵ is influenced by how the different elements in the analysis are operationalized. *Youth political participation* is operationalized by political participation in CSOs and political participation in political parties (of course, *youth* is the participating actor in all cases). Why these types of political participation have been chosen, as well as why other forms of political participation, such as demonstrations, sit-ins, and Internet-based participation, have not been included, has already been discussed thoroughly in the introduction (when defining and delimiting “political participation”).

²⁴ The terms used in Cook and Campbell’s system of validity have been borrowed here (Lund 2002: 104-105). Other authors referred to in this section, such as Adcock and Collier (2001) and George and Bennett (2005: 19), use other terms for the same concepts of validity.

²⁵ Construct validity evaluates whether the dependent and independent variables measure the relevant concepts, whether the operationalization of the variables includes all relevant aspects of a concept (Adcock and Collier 2001: 530; Kleven 2002: 142; Lund 2002: 105-106).

The operationalization of *role in politics* is guided by the discussion conducted in the second chapter in relation to the first sub-research question, and thus focalizes on exclusion from/inclusion in politics. *Role in politics* is therefore operationalized by perceived exclusion from/inclusion in the political sphere and relation to political leaders. In the interview guide, this is conceptualized by the question “describe your place in Tunisia today”, which was asked all the respondents. In addition, they were probed on their relation to other actors, why Tunisian youth are so disinterested in politics, and whether and how their place in Tunisia has changed since 2011. The prompts were important to keep the respondents talking and get the conversation back on the right trail (Berry 2002: 681-682; Leech 2002: 667). In addition, the prompts helped discover new aspects of the subject under analysis, and thus enhance the construct validity.

The main challenge was to investigate whether the respondents actually felt excluded from or included in the political sphere without asking leading questions. This is why respondents were asked to describe their place in Tunisia today. This is a type of “grand tour question”, where respondents are asked to describe something they know well (Leech 2002: 667; Leech et al. 2013: 216). It is a fairly open and vague question which can lead in many directions. If the respondent misunderstood the question or moved away from the relevant subject, the prompts were used to get the respondent “back on track”. Especially the prompts on relation to other actors and why youth are so disinterested in politics were employed partly for this purpose. This last prompt may seem leading. However, as the respondents were politically active youth, this assumption did not concern them directly, and thus seemed like the best way to make them discuss their own place in Tunisian politics without presuming too much (Leech 2002: 666). Prompts on whether and how their place in Tunisia had changed since 2011 made it possible to evaluate the consistency in their answers and maybe discover some new aspects of characteristics of youth participation in politics that they had not mentioned after the first question. They were also asked whether they had been politically active before 2011, and whether they had participated in the demonstrations in 2011 and onwards, to be able to evaluate the context of their answers (Adcock and Collier 2001: 534).

Issues cutting across the Islamist-secular cleavage are operationalized by issues that are not related to this cleavage, such as economy, security, social issues, etc. Certainly, some issues can be regarded as relevant for both the Islamist-secular cleavage and other cleavages, such as equality between the sexes. This will be taken into account in the analysis. Regarding

personal gains, the operationalization is taken from Hardin's (1982) contribution to the rational choice perspective of social movement theory, discussed in the second chapter. Thus, "personal gains" is operationalized by friendship, company, sense of belonging, improved self-image or status, solidarity, and career. In interviews it can be difficult to assess whether the motivations the respondents outline are the same as their actual motives for being politically active. This is especially pertinent with regard to personal gains, as some may find this a too egoistic motivation, and thus prefer to highlight other motivations that do not lead to personal gain. This challenging aspect of personal gains as a motivation for political participation will be taken into account in the analysis.

In the interview guide, both *issues cutting across the Islamist-secular cleavage* and *personal gains* were conceptualized by the question "what are your motivations for being politically active", a question that was asked all the respondents. In some cases, the respondents were prompted on which subjects are of most importance to them, if the motivations they mentioned were very unspecific or vague. In addition, they were in some cases asked why they had chosen to become active in the party/CSO they are members of. Finally, the respondents were also asked to "describe how you wish for Tunisia to be in five years", to cross-check the answers and discover other possible motivations.

Finally, two control variables were operationalized as well. The *rural/urban* variable was conceptualized by living in smaller cities or in rural regions, or living in Tunis or other large cities. All the respondents lived in Tunis, except for one who lived in Sousse. Hence, this variable did not vary between the respondents as all lived in urban areas. The *sex* variable was conceptualized by man and woman.

With regard to internal validity²⁶, this is most relevant with regard to the two hypotheses, which argue that "issues cutting across the Islamist-secular cleavage" and "personal gains" (independent variables) affect "political participation among youth" (dependent variable) positively. The two control variables rural/urban and sex were introduced to control for possible underlying effects that may influence both independent and dependent variables, and thus create a false causal effect between these. As mentioned, all respondents had the same value on the rural/urban variable, thus, possible variations between the respondents are not

²⁶ Internal validity refers to whether the independent variable(s) actually affects the dependent variable, and that the effect from the independent variable(s) to the dependent variable is not caused by another underlying variable (Gerring 2005: 169; Lund 2002: 106).

caused by rural/urban variations. Regarding the sex variable, the sample was nearly equally distributed between men and women, also within each political organization.

Regarding the direction of the causal effects, it is possible that political participation in a CSO or political party affects youth's motivations for being politically active. However, it could be argued that the direction of the casual effects assumed in the hypotheses are logic and intuitive. In addition, they are in accordance with the theoretical framework, which guides the analysis. Another challenge associated with internal validity is that if the analysis reveals a causal relationship between one or both independent variables and the dependent variable, it will not be possible to evaluate *how much* the independent variable(s) affect the dependent variable. This is one of the flaws of case studies when compared with statistical studies, and implies that it is impossible to know how much of the independent variable(s) is necessary for the dependent variable to occur (George and Bennett 2005: 25). This will be taken into account in the analysis.

Regarding external validity²⁷, a disadvantage of non-probability sampling is that the external validity can be weakened by a selection-bias (Frendreis 1983: 258; Tansey 2007: 769). It has already been argued that it is not a primary goal of this analysis to be able to generalize to a wider population. Nonetheless, efforts were made to select a diverse and representative sample of respondents. For instance, although all the CSOs analyzed were established after the revolution to work with post-revolution issues such as empowerment and inclusion of citizens, the sample contains organizations that work with different approaches and subjects, even though they might have an overall objective partially in common. Regarding political parties, the lack of the secular leftist party Front Populaire in the sample was compensated for by including a relatively high number of respondents from the parties that were included in the sample (Beyers et al. 2014: 181; Frendreis 1983: 258; Tansey 2007: 769).

With regard to snowball-sampling, which was employed in some cases to get in touch with new respondents, an important problem can be that the respondent who provides new respondents might choose persons who she knows have the same thoughts and values as her (Bleich and Pekkanen 2013: 87). This bias weakens the representativeness of the sample. In this case, this can of course be an issue. Fortunately, most of the respondents were not

²⁷ External validity evaluates whether and to what extent the results of the analysis are generalizable. For whom can the results be valid, what individuals, situations and periods can the results say something about (Lund 2002: 105-106)?

selected through snowball-sampling. Also, measures were taken to make the sample of respondents as representative as possible, for instance by ensuring a satisfactory variety in age, sex, and positions within the CSOs and parties.

Regarding the analysis' reliability²⁸, it could be threatened by the use of probing in all the interviews (Berry 2002: 681). As there was only one interviewer, the important reliability challenges that can be caused by having two or more interviewers are not relevant in this case. In addition, several measures were taken to make the interviews as consistent and similar as possible. For instance, notes on relevant probes were written into the interview guide in the desired order. Hence, not only were the same issues brought up in all interviews, the questions were to a great extent also asked in the same order. At the same time, the wording and the order of the probes had to be adjusted to each interview, to keep the conversation-like structure and the good rapport to the respondent. This is, as Leech et al. (2013: 217) argue, a typical example of the trade-off between "loss of reliability across interviews and loss of validity within the interview itself" that interviewers can encounter in semi-structured interviews.

Additional measures were therefore taken to strengthen the analysis' reliability. For instance, a preliminary coding template had been created before the interviews started, which guided the interviews in the same direction regardless of possible deviations. Some general "bridges" were also prepared before the interviewing started, in case the respondent talked too long about non-relevant issues (Berry 2002: 681-682).

As mentioned, all of the interviews except for one were recorded and then transcribed as soon as possible after the interview. This strengthens the analysis' reliability, as neither time/loss of memory or the researcher's own values and beliefs will affect the respondents' answers. In addition, it makes it easier for other researchers to evaluate and cross-check the analysis (Bleich and Pekkanen 2013: 93; Bryman 2012: 482; Leech et al. 2013: 220). As several of the interviews were conducted in cafés or restaurants, some background noise caused some of the respondents' words to be difficult to understand, even though this was rarely the case. In those cases, it was noted in the transcription, and as the interviews mostly were transcribed right after the interview, it was possible to note down missing words when these were

²⁸ Reliability measures how consistent the results of repeated tests with the chosen measuring instrument are (Berry 2002: 679). How accurately are the operationalized variables measured? Will the results be the same if the same study is conducted again?

remembered (Bryman 2012: 485; Leech et al. 2013: 220). With regard to the interview that was not recorded, notes were taken during the interview, and these were written out with additional comments immediately after the interview (Leech et al. 2013: 220). This respondent was obviously not quoted directly in the analysis.

Regarding the analysis in itself, two overarching categories related to the research questions were developed before the analysis began: role of youth in Tunisian politics, and motivations for political participation among youth. Then, several higher-level concepts were developed under each category: “exclusion from politics by political elites”, “Islamist-secular cleavage” and “personal gains”. Under each higher-level concept, lower-level concepts were developed that described or nuanced the themes represented by higher-level concepts (Leech et al. 2013: 221; Strauss and Corbin 2008: 159-160). During the analysis, these categories and concepts were employed to code each interview. Additional concepts (both higher-level and lower-level) were developed underway when data did not fit into any of the existing concepts or when a new aspect of a concept was discovered. The reliability of the analysis is certainly enhanced by the fact that there was only one coder who analyzed the data (Leech et al. 2013: 221).

The research design and method chosen for the analysis have now been presented and discussed. This lays the ground for the analysis of political participation among Tunisian youth, which is precisely what the next two chapters attempt at.

4 Politically active youth's role in Tunisian politics

The two following chapters contain the thesis' analysis. In this chapter, what the data tells us about what role politically active youth believe they have in Tunisian politics is examined and discussed, based on the first sub-research question and the discussion in the second chapter regarding whether politically active youth are excluded from politics by political elites or not.

To recall, the first sub-research question asks *what role do politically active youth believe they have in Tunisian politics?*

The main source of data employed in the analysis in this and the next chapter is the interviews conducted with 20 politically active youth. Additionally, this data is corroborated with the theoretical framework and the existing literature previously presented. To recall, "role in politics" was in the interview guide conceptualized by a description of the respondent's place in Tunisia today, in addition to probes on how this place has changed since 2011, the respondent's relation to other actors, as well as Tunisian youth's disinterest in politics.

Three distinct issues stand out from the respondents' answers: causes of disinterest in politics among youth, exclusion of youth from politics by political elites, and other reasons for lack of politically active youth. These topics will be examined separately, and differences between the different groups of respondents will be explored when it is relevant. The chapter will be concluded by a discussion regarding how the data relates to the claim that Tunisian politically active youth are excluded from politics by political elites, as well as a tentative answer to the first sub-research question.

4.1 Disinterest in politics among youth

First of all, it is relevant to highlight that nearly all the respondents mentioned the importance of including youth in Tunisian politics, and argued that youth are indispensable for Tunisia's development. Some also mentioned how political inclusion of youth is a fruitful way of countering the recruitment of young Tunisians to jihadism and terrorism. Political activity in a political party or CSO can give youth a sense of belonging, while at the same time "open their eyes". It is important to give the youth a feeling that "we believe in them". These arguments

echo several of the reasons for why one should study Tunisia's politically active youth, highlighted in the introduction chapter.

Did the respondents believe that Tunisian youth were interested in politics and eager to be politically active at the beginning of 2011, as Hoffman and Jamal (2014: 289) argue? None of the respondents contradicted this argument, and some highlighted the "boom" of youth political interest and participation that Tunisia experienced during and right after the 2011 revolution. Especially respondents from Ennahda, but also respondents from different CSOs, talked about how youth were very important and influenced a lot during and after the revolution, and how everybody wanted to do politics after Ben Ali's fall and adhered in great numbers to different parties and CSOs. As one of the respondents from Ennahda claimed, "it was like a buzz to be on the political scene [after the revolution]"²⁹ (Sliti 05.12.2015)³⁰. The hope for a better future that prevailed among Tunisian youth during this period was also highlighted by several of the respondents. Similarly, when asked whether they had participated in the demonstrations in 2011, a common answer was "yes of course, as all Tunisian youth".

How has this evolved since the spring of 2011? All the respondents except for one argued that there is a disinterest in politics prevailing among Tunisian youth. This is clearly in line with both the 2014 World Bank report (Banque Mondiale 2014: 11-19) and Hoffman and Jamal's (2012: 284) study of Arab youth. Importantly, several argued that a radical change in opinions and attitudes towards politics has occurred among Tunisian youth since early 2011. Some regard the 2011 elections to the National Constituent Assembly as a turning point in youth's political engagement. According to several respondents, while youth had adhered to political parties and CSOs in great numbers right after the revolution, especially the parties experienced an important loss of young members after the elections in October 2011. Many respondents believed that the hope and excitement that had prevailed among Tunisian youth after Ben Ali's fall was substituted with a feeling of despair and disengagement in politics. A respondent from Nidaa Tounes argued that this has been the case in his party, stating that in 2012 (when Nidaa Tounes was created), things were more dynamic and the youth in the party were more engaged in the party's work. As of late 2015, fewer and fewer young adherents participate in party activities, and few remain loyal to the party (Ben Chebil 16.12.2015).

²⁹ All quotes from the analysis' respondents have been translated from French by the author, unless otherwise noted.

³⁰ A list of the respondents can be found in the appendix.

The one respondent that would not characterize Tunisian youth as disinterested in politics argued that “I don’t believe that to not vote means that you are disinterested. You can be extremely interested, decide that the offer is not convenient, and therefore not go and vote. To not vote can be a choice” (Ounissi 16.12.2015). This could certainly be the case for some Tunisian youth, and highlights the challenges encountered when measuring political participation only by turnout at the ballot box. The argument is also supported by one of the main findings of the 2011 NDI analysis, which showed that Tunisian youth had a great desire to participate in politics, but that they were skeptical about certain political parties and individuals in the political elites (Collins 2011: 5, 10).

However, the NDI analysis was conducted in 2011, and, as argued in the previous paragraph, a lot has changed since then. For instance, the 2014 World Bank report found that a majority of Tunisian youth lacked any significant knowledge of Tunisian politics (Banque Mondiale 2014: 18), indicating that Ounissi’s argument above might not be valid for all Tunisian youth who did not vote in 2011 or 2014. Another respondent from Ennahda, who believed that most Tunisian youth are disinterested, made a distinction between youth active in politics before 2011 and the rest. He argued that as of late 2015, only those who were active before 2011 are still following the political process: “now, nearly only the young who [...] more or less practiced politics before the revolution can follow the action, [while] many of those who became activists after the revolution have a feeling of desperation and hatred” (Trabelsi 05.12.2015). Though there might be some truth in this statement, most of the youth interviewed in this analysis were not politically active before 2011.

However, although the respondents were almost unanimous in denouncing the prevailing disinterest in politics among Tunisian youth, they to some extent disagreed when asked what causes this disinterest. One reason for disinterest that many of the respondents highlighted was “impatience”, even though they disagreed regarding whether this impatience was “legitimate”. Generally, many of the respondents claimed that youth are disinterested in politics because they have lost patience in the political process and in politicians. This is caused by, among other things, the many promises that were given during the electoral campaigns both in 2011 and in 2014, but that have not been realized. Interestingly, a cleavage among some of the respondents who mentioned impatience as a reason for youth disinterest in politics exists. It separates those who believe that this impatience is understandable and legitimate, agreeing that politicians have been too preoccupied by insignificant issues such as

internal conflicts, and those who believe that youth are too impatient and that a transition from autocracy takes time.

When explaining why she thinks Tunisian youth are disinterested in politics, one respondent from I Watch argued that “when we observe the parliament, we see people who attack each other [...]. People are sick of it. The [National Constituent] Assembly lasted for three or four years to make the constitution. It took too long” (Fellah 04.12.2015). This illustrates how some believe that the politicians have overstayed their welcome, for example in the NCA, by quarreling with each other instead of leading the transitional process in an effective manner. This argument was presented by several of the respondents. On the other hand, a respondent from Nidaa Tounes answered this to the same question: “the youth no longer believe in politics because they listened to [the politicians’] promises during the elections, and after there is nothing. It’s not with a magic wand that we can do all this, it’s with time, it’s not done quickly, it’s not magic. [...] There are things that bloc.” (Ben Youssef 04.12.2015). This shows how some of the respondents believed that the youth’s impatience was not grounded in reality, and that they have to understand that a political transition like the one Tunisia is going through takes time, especially when the country has to cope with challenges such as terrorism and insecurity.

It must be mentioned that most of the respondents who mentioned impatience as a cause for youth disinterest positioned themselves between these two opposites: while they understood the impatience expressed by many young Tunisians, they also argued that such a political transition takes time, and that it is understandable that the economic situation has deteriorated since 2011. For instance, the respondent from Sawty claimed that “I totally agree that after a rupture with a certain system, change is necessary, time is necessary. I understand that. But regarding marginalized youth, there is now a need for more economic promotion” (Barkallah 07.12.2015). In addition, some respondents mentioned impatience among youth as a cause for disinterest, without commenting on whether they thought it is a legitimate feeling or not.

Other causes for political disinterest were also mentioned by the respondents. Many stated the poor economic conditions and high unemployment among youth in Tunisia as an important cause, and especially two explanations for why this causes youth disinterest in politics were presented. Firstly, young people who do not have a job and thus an income, struggling to get food on the table every day, will have other priorities than political participation. Some basic necessities must be secured before one can invest time and energy in political activities.

Secondly, the economic deterioration has created a sense of frustration, hopelessness and alienation from politics, related to the issue of impatience mentioned above. The politicians have not been able to solve the economic crisis, provide employment for the youth and secure their basic necessities. Thus, youth lose interest and faith in politics, as it does not seem to solve any of their problems, and a feeling of disappointment prevails.

The “culture” or “nature” of the ancient regime of Ben Ali was highlighted by several respondents as an important reason for why youth are disinterested in politics in Tunisia. For instance, several of the respondents from Afek Tounes pointed at this, stating that “the old regime did everything to make youth disinterested in political activity” (Arousse 02.12.2015), and “the Tunisian education [under Ben Ali] did not give any importance to this type of questions: politics, public life, organizations, volunteering. [...] It is a question of habits and education” (Fatnassi 08.12.2015). Similarly, several respondents mentioned the lack of “political culture” from the old regime as an important factor. Without any respondents saying so, this cause might be more relevant when explaining a general lack of political interest, and not so much the rapid decline in political interest among youth after the initial boom in spring 2011. At the same time, the nature of the old regime and the habits this gave Tunisian youth may explain how this rapid decline in political interest was possible, and why Tunisian youth did not remain politically active despite the difficulties and challenges encountered.

As mentioned when discussing the issue of impatience as a reason for youth disinterest in politics, several respondents argued that youth get tired of watching politicians quarrel with each other, while not resolving the youth’s problems. Taking this a step further, one explanation for youth disinterest in politics frequently stated by the respondents was that political leaders occupy the entire political space, not leaving any room for youth. A respondent argued that the youth do not see the benefit of being active in politics because they do not feel they can change anything (Respondent 1 10.12.2015). Additionally, the lack of communication, trust, as well as common interests between the political elites and the youth were often mentioned. This gives support to Boukhars’ (2015) argument regarding a (generation) gap between political elites and youth in Tunisia, as well as Silveira’s (2015: 19-20) claim that the weak representation of youth in politics in Tunisia has led to an alienation and mistrust among youth towards politics and politicians. A respondent from Ennahda (the one who believed that Tunisian youth are not disinterested in politics) framed the issue like this:

“[...] a lot of people who are not at all from my political family voted for me [in the 2014 parliamentary elections] only because they have the impression that I’m connected to the society I’m in, and that I’m young, and that I understand, and that we speak the same language, and that we speak about the same problems, we have experienced the same challenges, [...] and they believe that a young woman who talks about the problems that young developers encounter, or is capable of understanding the problems of students because she herself was a student not long ago, they feel that she is closer to their preoccupations. Thus, political parties must be able to put forward personalities that correspond to the society in which we live [...]. It might be this disconnection among the traditional political parties, which in some cases are not completely conscious about the need for reform, that causes problems.” (Ounissi 16.12.2015)

This quote seems to indicate that Tunisian youth believe descriptive representation leads to substantive representation. It also captures the youth identity employed in this thesis’ definition of “youth”: the common challenges and experiences youth have make them identify with each other, belonging to the same youth generation and striving for common goals.

To sum up, the respondents generally agreed that Tunisian youth have become disinterested in politics, after a boom in political activity among the cohort right after the revolution. Additionally, they state several reasons for why this disinterest has occurred. Among the most important causes are youth impatience with the political process and leaders, the lack of economic and social reform leading to, among other things, increased unemployment among youth, lack of political culture inherited from the Ben Ali regime, and the lack of space for youth in the political sphere. It is first and foremost the last cause that seems to support the claim that politically active youth are excluded from politics by political elites. It is therefore interesting to examine this more specifically: did the respondents believe that political elites are excluding Tunisian youth from politics, and more importantly, that they themselves are excluded?

4.2 Youth exclusion from politics

If the Tunisian transition is a case of democratic transition theory, this implies that it is the *political elites* that exclude youth from politics. As the previous section demonstrated, the respondents for the most part agreed that youth are disinterested in politics. However, several explanations for this disinterest were mentioned, showing that it is not necessarily caused by or does not automatically imply exclusion from politics by other actors. When asked to

describe their place in Tunisia today, many of the respondents talked about whether youth are excluded from politics. A possible general trend in their answers is that the respondents believed that political leaders take up too much of the political space, and that this has caused an exclusion of youth. At the same time, the lack of youth in politics should also be blamed on the youth themselves, for different reasons. Thus, the political elite is not the only one at fault.

Despite this general trend, there also exists a relatively significant division between respondents active in CSOs and respondents active in political parties. To simplify, those active in CSOs were more inclined to regard youth as excluded from politics by political elites, while those active in parties had a tendency to highlight youth's responsibilities and regard them as alienated rather than excluded from politics. This might not be that surprising, as youth active in parties could be less inclined to criticize their own leadership. In addition, the possible bias discussed in relation to external validity with regard to the sample of CSOs – that all of them were created after the revolution to work with post-revolutionary issues – may affect these results, as this type of organizations could be more inclined to criticize the transitional process and its political leaders. However, the following analysis also sheds light on some interesting and new aspects related to these issues. In this section, the respondents' thoughts and opinions regarding youth exclusion from the political sphere by political elites will be examined. Other reasons for lack of politically active youth will be discussed in the next section.

Seven out of the nine respondents from CSOs argued that the political elite excludes youth from politics, without necessarily using those exact words. Here is an example of their arguments:

“Youth feel that they were used, exploited, because youth were mobilized during elections, only. We have a very good example: we say to youth that if you have met someone who says hello, asks “how are you”, you should know that it's a politician who is preparing his electoral campaign. So there is a deception and disconnection from reality among politicians, those who are elected now [...] do not communicate with youth [...] if you are a young member of a political party, your role will be to arrange the chairs, put up posters, do communication, make press releases, contact the media, and that's all. You will not have a role. [...] So our challenge is the inclusion of youth in political and social life.” (Garoui 04.12.2015)

Other respondents argued in similar manners, claiming that the political elites “like to talk about the issue ‘youth’”, but that there in reality is a “total exclusion” of youth from decision-making positions in parties because the political elites rather place themselves in these positions (Sfaxi 03.12.2015). A respondent argued that the parties never proposed projects to the youth, and that it is “the politicians fault”³¹ that political elites are distant from youth (Laribi 15.12.2015). Another respondent argued that the relations between youth in civil society and political leaders “are almost broken” as there is “no fundamental dialogue with youth in organizations as well as youth in political parties” (Barkallah 07.12.2015).

Clearly, the respondents active in CSOs believed that youth are excluded from politics by political elites. However, some characteristics of this exclusion stand out. The first thing that springs to mind is the respondents’ focus on political parties. Except from Barkallah, who believed that youth both in civil society and in parties are excluded, the respondents quoted here believed that youth have a greater possibility of influencing politics in CSOs than in parties. This is in accordance with Laiq’s study of youth CSOs in Tunisia, where she argues that “youth have often criticized the lack of internal democracy within political parties and have been more positive about the horizontal structure they perceive to exist in the civil society sector” (Laiq 2013: 65). This was also the case for most of the respondents from CSOs, which might not be so surprising as they have chosen this arena for participation.

Second, the respondents seemed to highlight two different aspects of youth exclusion from politics. One aspect regards how youth active in political parties are only used in electoral campaigns and similar activities, while never getting a possibility to actually influence decision-making in the party. This, and especially the expression “exploited” employed by Garoui, supports Bonnefoy’s (2014: 2) argument about the “stolen revolution” narrative. Youth who initiated and led the 2011 demonstrations adhered en masse to political parties after Ben Ali’s fall, expecting to be able to continue leading, or at least influencing, the course of the revolution from here. However, they now feel that the transitional process has been appropriated by institutionalized actors, especially political parties, that are far from young, and that they have been sidelined.

The other aspect regards the lack of communication and disconnection that exists between political leaders and youth *in general*. This is corroborated in Laiq’s study, where the

³¹ Not translated from French, the respondent spoke English.

disconnection between state and citizen is highlighted as an important issue for youth CSOs (Laiq 2013: 62). However, it is uncertain whether the respondents from CSOs interviewed in this thesis regarded themselves as a part of this general youth that is disconnected from political leaders. As mentioned, several believed that youth have a greater possibility of influencing politics when active in CSOs than in parties. The respondents stated several explanations for why youth in CSOs have more power to influence, such as ideological neutrality and financial support from international organizations. However, the reason that most of the respondents highlighted for CSOs being more effective arenas for influence than political parties was that there is no space for youth in parties, as the old leaders refuse to give up their positions. In CSOs, on the other hand, there is no such hierarchy, and the youth are given possibilities of leadership and decision-making, which again give them the opportunity to influence politics. As one respondent from Al Bawsala put it:

“I believe that it is much easier to influence when in civil society. Because in political parties, there is the executive office of the party, and it’s in general people who have been there for a very long time. The youth will be in charge of communication, of... accessories you could say, they will not be in the executive office” (Alouini 14.12.2015).

This again implies that CSOs actually can influence politics and political leaders, which nearly all the CSO-respondents agreed on. A respondent from Jasmine Foundation, who had previously been active in the political party CPR (Congrès pour la République), argued that she now had much more impact on politics than when she was active in CPR. When active in CPR, she never felt included in decision-making, the youth’s voice was rarely heard, and the “old leaders” made all the decisions (Laribi 15.12.2015). This echoes Marks’ (2013) claim that many young Tunisian Salafists rather organize in CSOs than in political parties because they feel neglected by political leaders.

It may not be surprising that respondents who are members of the relatively large and well established CSOs Al Bawsala, I Watch and Jasmine Foundation believe that CSOs have an important influence on political leaders. However, even though the respondent from Sawty had previously stated that there is no dialogue between youth in civil society and political leaders (Barkallah quoted above), he later claimed that “for me, at the moment, civil society is the most effective [for being close to politics]” (Barkallah 07.12.2015). The respondent from JID was maybe the least optimistic with regard to his possibilities of influencing: “We feel that the political landscape is more or less confiscated, it’s monopolized by the generation of

the 20th century. We don't feel that the youth [...] are well placed, well represented" (Sfaxi 03.12.2015). The "confiscation" of the political landscape mentioned here clearly resembles Bonnefoy's (2014: 2) stolen revolution-narrative.

In summary, this indicates that the respondents from CSOs believed that it is legitimate to blame political elites for the lack of youth in politics, primarily due to the sidelining and marginalization of youth who are active in political parties, as well as the lack of communication and the disconnection between political elites and youth in general.

Nevertheless, their arguments do not entirely confirm the claim that politically active youth feel excluded from politics by political elites, as most of the respondents from CSOs felt they have an opportunity to influence politics through the organization they are a member of.

Respondents from political parties differed more in their opinions regarding political exclusion of youth. Some believed, as the respondents from CSOs, that youth have been excluded from politics by the political elites. Here is one such argument:

"[...] I believe that it's only the leaders of the political parties that make decisions, and I believe that the role of youth becomes weaker and weaker. So today I believe that the two leaders of the two largest parties – principally Ennahda and Nidaa – are the true decision makers" (Trabelsi 05.12.2015)

Another respondent argued that "the youth in Nidaa Tounes have lost hope" because they were "forgotten" by the leaders of Nidaa Tounes after they won the elections in 2014 (Ben Chebil 16.12.2015). Similarly, a respondent from Ennahda argued that all youth "are eliminated from the political scene", and thus instead turn to civil society to influence politics from there (Sliti 05.12.2015).

Three elements in these quotes are particularly interesting. Firstly, all the three respondents are male. In fact, this implies that all the male respondents from Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes except one stated that they felt excluded from politics by political elites. In contrast, none of the female respondents expressed such a feeling of exclusion from politics by political elites. Truly, because of the relatively low number of respondents (one male respondent from Nidaa Tounes and three from Ennahda), it is difficult to assert whether this is an actual pattern, or only a coincidence. However, it could be an interesting issue to follow up, especially as no studies on youth and political participation in Tunisia have been conducted where possible differences between men and women are taken into account.

Secondly, the first quote (from Trabelsi) provides support to transition theory's assumption that the political elites excluding youth from politics are mainly the leaders of Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes – or what transition theory would call the moderate opposition to the old regime and the soft liners from the old regime. Thirdly, these quotes show that, similarly to the respondents from CSOs, the respondents from parties talked about how youth active in *political parties* are excluded by political leaders, and not youth in civil society. However, this does not imply that respondents from parties generally believed CSOs have a greater influence on politics; apart from Sliti (quoted above), no one did. Most of them talked about civil society in positive terms, believing that it is an important arena for political participation, but few argued that youth have a greater possibility to influence politics in CSOs than in parties. Two of the respondents from parties, both of them from Afek Tounes, argued that it is easier to influence politics from parties than CSOs. One of them, who previously had been active in I Watch, claimed that

“It's the political parties that have the power. It's the political parties that have the ideas, the political strategies, thus it's them that change things. With civil society it's different. You influence, maybe, here in Tunisia we are not there yet. You exert a sort of pressure, but those who really change things are the political parties” (Fatnassi 08.12.2015).

What is interesting about this quote, which differs from the arguments of the respondents in CSOs, is that the respondent does not believe parties are better arenas for political influence by youth because youth have a more important place in parties than in CSOs, but because it is parties that make important political decisions and “rule” politics. Among respondents from CSOs, the main argument for why youth could influence more in CSOs than in parties was that youth had a more influential position in CSOs than in parties, where the leaders make all the decisions.

Having this difference in mind, and looking more closely at whether respondents from parties perceive youth as excluded from politics, it might not be that surprising that it was youth from Afek Tounes who believed that they, as youth, can influence more through parties than CSOs. All of the four respondents from Afek Tounes felt included in politics, believing that they had a possibility to influence the politics of their party. However, they all highlighted that this is not the case in all parties; all of them believed that there exist great differences between Afek Tounes and other parties, especially Nidaa Tounes, Ennahda, and other parties that existed before the revolution. In Afek Tounes, they argued, there is no established machinery that

prohibits young members from taking the reins, and everybody has the opportunity to influence, progress and make decisions, as the “leadership is everywhere”. When discussing other parties, however, they pointed to the same problems as respondents from CSOs did: the youth are only employed during electoral campaigns to do the work on the ground or as a “décor for the party, while they will never have any real influence. Very interestingly, two of the Afek Tounes respondents pointed to the lack of a parallel youth structure as an important reason for why youth are more included in Afek Tounes than in other parties:

“In the other parties, everybody tries to create specific institutions for the youth and women. This does not exist in Afek Tounes, because we never had the need to create specific institutions for these people. [...] They are in the institutions, they have the power to make decisions, and that’s it” (Ben Slimane 09.12.2015)

“We [Afek Tounes] are opposed to the youth parallel structure. [In other parties] there is in general a national council, an executive office where all the decisions are made, and there’s the decoration: the youth. [...] We don’t work with that, we don’t care. You are competent whether you are man, woman, young, old, it’s all the same” (Masmoudi 19.12.2015)

It is noteworthy that Nur Laiq argues in her study of political active youth in Tunisia and Egypt that what differentiates youth political participation in the two countries is that youth in Tunisia have been incorporated into political parties’ central structures, usually through youth wings or other parallel structures. This, she claims, makes youth in Tunisia better integrated into party structures than youth in Egypt, and gives them a political ladder to climb (Laiq 2013: 38, 52). Laiq thus has a different view than the respondents from Afek Tounes with regard to the possibilities of political inclusion that parallel structures give youth.

The quotes from the Afek Tounes-respondents above may imply that youth in other parties feel more excluded from politics than youth in Afek Tounes. To a certain extent, that is the case. The three respondents quoted above, who believed that political elites exclude youth from politics, were as mentioned from Nidaa Tounes and Ennahda. This could be a consequence of the assumption from transition theory that the leaders of Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes – or “the cartel of party elites” – are controlling the political process and excluding all other actors. Thus, youth in these parties might feel more excluded than youth in other parties or in CSOs, as they do not even have the possibility to influence their own leadership. However, the remaining respondents from Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes did not express a feeling of exclusion, and three of them argued that they felt included in their party and had the

possibility to influence the agenda and decision-making. One of the respondents from Ennahda believed that youth may seem excluded from politics at the surface, and that it was correct that they don't have any high-ranking positions. At the same time, youth do have many important positions, they influence and are present in parties, and they set the agenda for the political debate through media and civil society. As opposed to the respondents from Afek Tounes, the respondents from Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes generally did not differentiate between different political parties when discussing whether youth are excluded from politics.

In summary, this indicates that the respondents from political parties were not unanimous in their opinions regarding youth exclusion from politics by political elites. Those from Afek Tounes felt included in their party and believed that they have a possibility to influence politics, while at the same time arguing that youth in other parties are politically excluded by political elites. Respondents from Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes were more divided, both with regard to whether youth in general are excluded from politics, and whether they themselves felt excluded by political elites. These results are not entirely compatible with Laiq's conclusion in her study of youth political participation in parties in Egypt and Tunisia. Although she believes that Tunisian youth are better integrated into party structures due to parallel youth structures, she also argues that

“[i]rrespective of structure, in the eyes of Egyptian and Tunisian youth, the political system is still rigged in favor of the old generation. [...] Youth from both Islamist and secular parties see the old elite as intent on having their moment in the sun. They find themselves at the bottom of the party heap and often excluded from decision-making. There is little room for input, and their voices are often disregarded or drowned out by the party elite. Nearly all youth activists lament the generation gap in their parties” (Laiq 2013: 52).

Clearly, Laiq's conclusion is more pessimistic with regard to youth inclusion in political parties, compared to this thesis' respondents, even though several issues and challenges mentioned are the same. The differences between Laiq's conclusion and the results of this analysis could come from the inclusion of Egyptian youth in Laiq's study, that might give an overall more pessimistic impression of youth inclusion in politics. Another explanation could be time: that Tunisian youth actually feel more included now than they did in 2013.

With regard to differences between youth in CSOs and youth in parties, the respondents from Afek Tounes believed that youth have a greater possibility of influencing politics through parties, while respondents from Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes did not believe there to be an

important difference between the two arenas. Their arguments, as well as those of the respondents from CSOs, could indicate that youth have a greater chance at influencing politics as members of political parties from the moment they actually are included in a party's decision-making procedures. However, as long as this is not attained, CSOs give youth more opportunities for political influence than parties.

Thus, the respondents from political parties seemed to support the claim that politically active youth are excluded from politics by political elites to a higher extent than respondents from CSOs, as some of the respondents from parties felt excluded from politics by political elites. At the same time, a majority characterized themselves as included in politics, hence weakening the support to this claim. Also, many respondents from CSOs argued that youth in political parties are excluded from positions of influence, while most respondents from parties did not believe that youth in CSOs are excluded from politics. In this regard, the respondents from CSOs provided stronger support to the claim than the respondents from parties.

Truly, this is not valid for the respondents from Afek Tounes, who believed that youth in CSOs and in several other political parties have little influence on politics. It is certain that Afek Tounes is a political party that differentiates itself from Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes, for instance with regard to position in the Tunisian political sphere, members, and history or legacy. The party is smaller than Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes, it won only eight seats in the parliamentary elections in October 2014. In comparison, Nidaa Tounes won 85 seats and Ennahda won 69 seats. Additionally, Afek Tounes incorporates less political actors active before 2011 than Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes, and they have a relatively higher amount of young politicians than the two other parties. Their political project focalizes on a restructuration and liberalization of the economy, while the Islamist-secular cleavage is not prioritized. Hence, it might not be so surprising that the analysis finds important differences between the respondents from the different parties. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the initial sample of parties included the secular-leftist political party Front Populaire. It would have been interesting to see how an inclusion of young members from this party or other small parties in the sample would have affected the results of the analysis.

Up until now, the respondents' opinions regarding youth exclusion from politics by political elites have been examined. However, as the discussion regarding youth disinterest in politics hinted at, the interviews also uncovered several other reasons for why there is a lack of politically active youth in Tunisia. These will now be explored.

4.3 Other reasons for lack of politically active youth

A distinction appeared in the answers of the respondents between political elites' exclusion of youth from politics, and an alienation from politics among youth caused by political elites' behavior. The latter cannot be regarded as direct political exclusion by political elites, as it is the youth that themselves chose to leave politics and activism.

One respondent argued that youth are deceived by politics, much due to internal conflicts between political elites that do not interest youth, and that occupy the entire political scene. Youth do not have the impression that they can change anything, and therefore they do not see the point of participating in politics (Respondent 1 10.12.2015). Several respondents mentioned these internal conflicts between political leaders as an important reason for why youth lose confidence in and turn their back on politics. This was also shown when reasons for youth disinterest in politics were examined. The respondent from Sawty claimed that “[due to the problem of trust between youth and politicians] youth have pulled back from politics compared to [...] 2011 and 2012” (Barkallah 07.12.2015). A respondent from I Watch argued that “the youth adhered to political parties en masse after 2011, and they worked hard during the elections, and then they left the parties en masse. [...] There was this loss of hope” (Fellah 04.12.2015). In these cases, the respondents did not argue that political elites had excluded youth from politics, but they nevertheless blamed the political elites indirectly for alienating youth from politics through their conflictual behavior and disconnection.

Other explanations for the lack of politically active youth were also presented by the respondents, where not the political elites, but the youth themselves are to be blamed. At the core of this argument is the belief that politics demand hard work, and that many young Tunisians who became politically active in 2011 believed that the political process would be done in no time, without any significant effort. Additionally, several of the respondents highlighted “experience” as an important asset if you want to gain important political positions. Thus, youth who had never been politically active before the revolution could not expect to get important, decision-making positions without beginning at the bottom of the ladder and climb to the top. This discouraged the impatient youth, who quickly left politics. These arguments are related to the claim that impatience among youth is a reason for youth disinterest in politics, especially those arguments that regard this impatience as illegitimate.

Here is an example of how these arguments were presented by the respondents:

“I don’t believe that youth are excluded. I don’t think so. The youth preferred to step back. There was a movement, a state of mind, a new state of mind, which is passivity. They want everything to come easily. But for me, you have to fight. And whether you are young or not young, it’s the same. [...] So yes, I believe the youth to be 100% responsible [for including themselves in politics]” (Masmoudi 19.12.2015)

Other respondents also argued that the youth “do not have the patience” and “will not work enough to reach a new standard” (Trabelsi 05.12.2015), or that the youth “do not take the time to progress” and “improve their capacities”, and thus do not have “a good vision with regard to political work” (Taghouti 04.12.2015). A respondent from Afek Tounes argued that she had herself experienced the possibilities youth have in Afek Tounes, and that “if you work hard you will easily find your place” and “evolve”. She also emphasized the difference between CSOs and political parties, believing that it would “not be easy” for youth who now are leaders in organizations to work in political parties, as “you really have to start at the beginning, in small positions” in parties (Fatnassi 08.12.2015).

Interestingly, these four respondents were all from political parties, as were most of the other respondents who presented similar arguments. Especially the last quote (Fatnassi) demonstrates an important difference between respondents from CSOs and respondents from parties. While a respondent from I Watch (Garoui) previously quoted believed that the youth’s leadership opportunities in CSOs give youth a possibility to influence politics, the respondent from Afek Tounes (Fatnassi) quoted above believed that real influence comes when you have to work hard to gain a leadership position, and that the easy access to high ranking positions in CSOs is something negative. This argument could be influenced by the fact that Fatnassi is a member of Afek Tounes, and as previously discussed, the respondents from this party generally believed they could influence politics. However, respondents from Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes also accentuated the necessity of hard work and experience, proving that it is not only an “Afek Tounes-effect”. Clearly, especially the respondents from political parties believed that youth are partially at fault for the lack of politically active youth in Tunisia.

In addition, it could seem that youth can be accused of excluding *other youth* from politics as well. For example, the respondent from JID argued that “we [JID] want youth to be better represented in ministerial and governmental institutions, and we don’t want any youth, we want youth who have a good education, who have a good background, who understand what they’re doing” (Sfaxi 03.12.2015). This attitude could contribute to the exclusion of a large

portion of Tunisian youth from politics. Interestingly, another respondent mentioned the same argument, but in a negative way, arguing that only really talented and creative youth with a lot of free time get important positions. Another example of youth excluding other youth is how two of the respondents from Nidaa Tounes claimed that rivalry and sabotage between different factions of youth in their party contributed to young members abandoning politics.

In summary, the respondents presented several other explanations for the lack of youth in Tunisian politics, in addition to exclusion by political elites. Youth may choose themselves to end their participation in politics; either due to alienation caused by political elites' behavior or because they do not have the patience, motivation or skills required to reach important political position through hard work. Additionally, it may seem like youth in some cases can contribute to the exclusion of other youth from politics, either by only allowing youth with certain qualifications to enter politics, or by sabotaging for rivals in the same party or organization.

Both respondents from parties and respondents from CSOs highlighted these other explanations for the lack of youth in Tunisian politics, indicating that even though the respondents from CSOs all blamed political elites for excluding youth from politics, they also put some of the blame on youth. However, the respondents from political parties still were the strongest advocates for the argument that youth lack the patience, motivation and skills required to reach positions of influence, while respondents from CSOs rather framed the lack of patience as a legitimate and understandable reason for leaving politics (as discussed with regard to youth disinterest in politics). Thus, it may seem that in this case, respondents from CSOs gave stronger support to the claim that politically active youth are excluded from politics by political leaders than respondents from parties.

4.4 Conclusion: politically active youth's role in Tunisian politics

To recall, the first sub-research question asked *what role do politically active youth believe they have in Tunisian politics?* The theoretical discussion related to this question, based on transition theory and existing literature on youth and political participation, revolved around whether politically active youth are excluded from politics by political elites or not.

The analysis conducted above, revolving around the respondents' opinions and thoughts regarding disinterest in politics among youth, youth exclusion from politics by political elites, and other reasons for the lack of politically active youth, seems to indicate that politically active youth feel included in Tunisian politics. Firstly, although nearly all the respondents agreed that Tunisian youth are disinterested in politics, they outlined several reasons for this: impatience among youth, economic and social challenges, the political culture inherited from the Ben Ali regime, and a lack of space for youth in the political sphere. Among these, only the last reason can indicate that politically active youth are excluded from politics by political elites. The analysis has thus uncovered several other factors that can contribute to explain the lack of politically active youth in Tunisia.

Secondly, a majority of the respondents characterized themselves as included in politics and believed that they have a possibility to influence politics and decision-making in their party or organization. Only a minority of the respondents from political parties argued that they felt excluded from the political scene. On the other side, nearly all the respondents agreed that political elites do exclude youth from politics. In addition, especially respondents from CSOs argued that youth active in political parties are excluded from politics. Similarly, respondents from Afek Tounes argued that youth active in other political parties and in CSOs do not have any influence on politics. Nevertheless, most of the respondents did feel included in politics.

Thirdly, most of the respondents also outlined other explanations for the lack of political active youth in Tunisia. The most important among these were alienation from politics (due to political elites' conflictual behavior) causing youth to leave the political scene, as well as a general lack of patience, motivation and skills necessary for political participation. In addition, the analysis suggests that youth may in some cases exclude other youth from politics.

Overall, the analysis thus seems to suggest that politically active Tunisian youth believe their role in politics to be characterized by inclusion, and that political influence is possible. However, this attitude seems to extend to only the arena of political participation that oneself is a part of, while youth in other arenas are perceived to have less opportunities of influence. In addition, several factors complicate youth participation in politics. However, these are caused as much by characteristics of Tunisian youth and structural and historical factors as by political elites.

The respondents' opinions and thoughts regarding their role in Tunisian politics have now been analyzed. In the next chapter, the same will be attempted at, this time with the respondents' thoughts and opinions regarding motivations for political participation among Tunisian youth.

5 Motivations for political participation among youth

This chapter contains the second part of the analysis. What the data tells us about motivations for political participation among Tunisian youth is examined and discussed, based on the second sub-research question as well as the two hypotheses.

To recall, the second sub-research question and two hypotheses are:

Sub-research question 2: What are Tunisian youth's motivations for being politically active?

Hypothesis 1: Youth are politically active to work for issues that cut across the Islamist-secular cleavage.

Hypothesis 2: Youth are politically active because of the personal gains they acquire from political activity.

To recall, the first hypothesis assumes that the Tunisian transition is a “pacted transition” as democratic transition theory outlines it. In that context, politically active youth are expected to be “non-elites” and therefore to cut across the traditional cleavage, which in Tunisia’s case is the Islamist-secular cleavage. As for the second hypothesis, the assumption is based on the argument from resource mobilization/rational choice perspective of social movement theory that personal gains are necessary to make people participate in collective action.

As mentioned, “issues cutting across the Islamist-secular cleavage” and “personal gains” were in the interview guide conceptualized by the question “what are your motivations for being politically active”, as well as a description of how they wished for Tunisia to be in five years. The respondents were in some cases probed on the most important issues for them, as well as whether and how their motivations had changed since 2011.

The chapter is divided in three. The respondents’ opinions and thoughts regarding the Islamist-secular, or traditional, cleavage (hypothesis 1) comes first, followed by a discussion on whether they seemed motivated by personal gains (hypothesis 2). Finally, the chapter will be concluded by an evaluation of the hypotheses, how the data relates to them, as well as a tentative answer to the second sub-research question.

5.1 Relation to traditional cleavage

In the analysis, “issues cutting across the Islamist-secular cleavage” is operationalized by issues that are not related to this cleavage, such as economy, security, and social issues.

What did the respondents argue is their motivation for being politically active? All in all, “economy” and “change” were the two issues most frequently mentioned as motivational factors, or as most important issues, in the interviews. Out of the 20 respondents, 16 brought up the economy as an important issue or as an area that must be prioritized in the future development of Tunisia. Among these, many simply mentioned “the economy” as an issue. Additionally, topics such as unemployment, poverty, equal distribution of resources, and the parallel economy of the black market were often mentioned as important issues. This is corroborated by Laiq’s study, where she argues that during her interviews with Tunisian youth, “the biggest challenge right now is the economy” is a phrase she heard many times (Laiq 2013: 33). It also confirms NDI’s study of Tunisian youth, which claims that the economy, and especially unemployment, was a prime concern to the youth in 2011. Here is an example of how the respondents highlighted the economy when asked about their motivations for being politically active:

“[The economy] is the most important issue. It’s the challenge. Now we have solved the challenge of the constitution, our democracy is working. [...] The problem now is essentially economic. We’ve never been as poor, without hope. It’s an economic crisis never seen before. The black market [...] and the problem of corruption, it’s enormous” (Fatnassi 08.12.2015)

Other respondents also argued that the economic phase of the transition has to take over for the political phase, which has succeeded. A respondent believed that “the political institutional period was from 2011 to 2014”, and that after that came “the period of the economy” which is important especially for the legitimacy of the “new regime”. The new political order needs to prove that it is “capable of producing growth” and to “share its wealth with the citizens” (Ounissi 16.12.2015). A respondent from Ennahda argued that “we have already fixed the political issue”, and that he therefore tried to convince the youth of Ennahda to “focalize on the economic issue”, which he regarded as “the most important” (Sliti 05.12.2015). Similarly, a respondent from Afek Tounes argued that “the first worry for Tunisia today is the economy”, and that his “prime objective” was to “create jobs for the unemployed” (Ben Slimane 09.12.2015).

As the quotes demonstrate, several of the respondents highlight the need for economic reforms, now that the political reforms have been implemented. The respondents from Afek Tounes advocated for a “socio-liberal” economic model, emphasizing the need to deregulate the economy and open the Tunisian markets. In other words, they placed themselves on the economic right-left cleavage. However, none of the respondents related the economic issues to the Islamist-secular cleavage. Thus, it can be said that this motivational issue cuts across the Islamist-secular cleavage, in line with hypothesis 1.

As mentioned in the third chapter under validity and reliability, some issues can be regarded as relevant for both the Islamist-secular cleavage and for other cleavages. “Change” is such an issue or motivational factor. 12 respondents across all parties and CSOs mentioned “change” either as the sole source of motivation for political participation, or as one out of several motivational issues. “Change” can mean a lot; it can be change from different things as well as change to different things. Among the respondents, it was mainly brought up in relation to Tunisia’s need for change from authoritarianism and dictatorship to democracy and political pluralism. Here is an example of how the respondents highlighted “change” as an important motivation. The quote is an answer to the question “what are your motivations for being politically active?”.

“To change things, it’s as simple as that. Because there are plenty of reforms to put in place, and Tunisia needs a new breath of air, youth. [...] That’s it, it’s only to change things the best that I can” (Arousse 02.12.2015)

As the quote indicates, the desire for change was an important motivation not only in 2011, but it also remained so as of late 2015, as many feel that some of the goals of the revolution have not yet been achieved. Other respondents framed the need for change that has motivated them as a change from the Ennahda-led Troika government, which had the power in Tunisia from October 2011 to January 2014, to a government that was not led by Ennahda. Not surprisingly, it was first and foremost respondents from Nidaa Tounes who framed “change” this way. Nonetheless, the need for “change” that was highlighted in the interviews was first and foremost framed as change from autocracy to democracy. Thus, “change” seems here to be connected to revolutionary goals such as political reform more often than it is connected to the Islamist-secular cleavage.

A third issue that many respondents brought up was “security”, linked to the threat posed by terrorism and jihadists. This, even more than “change”, is an issue that can be regarded as

both disconnected from and connected to the Islamist-secular cleavage. Truly, a great majority of the respondents believed it was important to highlight that the terrorism Tunisia has experienced has nothing to do with Islam, that the terrorists are not real Muslims, and that this has nothing to do with Tunisia's moderate Islamists. It might not be surprising that respondents from Ennahda pointed to this, as one respondent answered when asked what issues were of most importance to him:

“The security is something that is very interesting for political parties and for politicians, because we have a big problem called terrorism. It's a global phenomenon that we have to confront, and fight against. We, the Islamists, we are doomed to be... to have relations, thoughts that are close to these fanatical Islamists, but I say no, Islam is innocent from all fanatical thoughts. And everything that Al-Qaida or Daesh do, we as moderate Islamists know that this does not represent Islam. Maybe we should say that the moderate Islamists have to make distinctions to fight against, to differentiate themselves from these fanatics” (Taghouti 04.12.2015)

However, this was not an argument made only by Ennahda members, as most of the other respondents also wished to highlight this important distinction between Islam and terrorism. Only respondents from Nidaa Tounes were inclined to point to a possible relationship between Ennahda and terrorism. For instance, when talking about Nidaa Tounes' cooperation with Ennahda, one respondent argued that Nidaa Tounes is forced to cooperate with Ennahda to get a majority, but that “others say they [Ennahda] have a hand in terrorism. If they do, they will be judged, it's certain” (Ben Youssef 04.12.2015). That Nidaa Tounes was created to counter Ennahda as a political force may of course partially explain this. At the same time, it must be made clear that a majority of the respondents from Nidaa Tounes, similarly to the other respondents, believed Islam to have an important place in Tunisia, that Tunisians are Muslim, and that political Islam in itself is not wrong. This will be examined more in detail later. To sum up, the security issue thus seems to be somewhat more connected to the Islamist-secular cleavage. At the same time, it supports hypothesis 1, as a great majority of the respondents who brought up security did it without relating it to the Islamist-secular cleavage.

Other issues that were brought up by the respondents as important were corruption and transparency, “clean politics” and politicians with integrity, social issues such as education and health reforms, women's rights, human rights, dignity, democratization, citizenship, youth empowerment and inclusion, decentralization and regional development, freedom of

expression, speech and thought, as well as freedom and liberty to be the way you like and tolerance against other religions or ideologies. Geopolitics and Tunisia's relations to the neighboring countries Algeria and Libya, as well as other Arab states, was also brought up a couple of times. Hence, in general, the Islamist-secular cleavage was not highlighted as a motivational factor for the respondents, neither as an important issue. The exception is one respondent, who said that the fear of an "iranization" of the Tunisian society when Ennahda came to power in 2011 made her become active in Nidaa Tounes. She further argued that the Islamist-secular cleavage was important to her, as the "islamization" of society conducted by Ennahda has to be countered (Respondent 1 10.12.2015). However, apart from this respondent, none of the others brought up the Islamist-secular cleavage, or issues related to this cleavage, as prime motivational factors.

The general trend thus seems to support hypothesis 1; that politically active youth in Tunisia are motivated by issues that cut across the Islamist-secular cleavage. This is in line with transition theory, which argues that non-elites wishing to influence politics will usually cut across the existing traditional cleavages, as well as Murphy's argument that youth activists in the Arab world tend to reject the ideological framework and boundaries constructed by the elder generations (Murphy 2012: 18; O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986: 42). In addition, the analysis thus far seems to support French's (2015: 2, 14) argument that young moderate Islamists are more angered by the Ennahda leadership's compromises on revolutionary issues than by the leadership's compromises on religious issues. Consequently, the analysis fails to support Lefèvre's (2015: 309) argument that religious issues such as the inclusion of sharia in the constitution were as important for Islamist youth. Certainly, it is important to note that this is not an analysis of Islamist youth, and that a sample of four Ennahda members is not enough to draw viable conclusions about this group's characteristics. Nevertheless, it is possible to relate the analysis to the literature on Tunisian Islamist youth by discussing the results in relation to French and Lefèvre's arguments.

This overview over what the respondents answered when asked about their motivations and the most important issues for them demonstrates that none brought up the Islamist-secular cleavage in itself, and few related the issues they brought up to the cleavage.³² This seems to support hypothesis 1. However, Laiq found in her study that although youth from Tunisia and

³² This is not to say that all the respondents' answers to these questions have been examined here; some also pointed to personal gains. This will be discussed in the next section.

Egypt argued that the revolution was not ideological at all, and that people did not categorize each other as Islamist, secular, leftist, etc., they have not been “able to escape from the legacy of the Islamist versus secularist binary that has dominated political life in Egypt and Tunisia for decades” (Laiq 2013: 6-8). Thus, it is necessary to examine the respondents’ thoughts and opinions on the Islamist-secular cleavage in itself, even though they initially seemed more preoccupied by the economy, democratic change, security, and other issues that did not directly relate to this traditional cleavage. Therefore, during the interviews, if the respondents did not bring up the Islamist-secular cleavage themselves, they were probed on what they thought about the cleavage. This was done somewhat differently depending on the respondent. Most often, the respondents were asked what they thought about the discussions that had dominated the constitution drafting process (as discussions related to the role of Islam in society, sharia and women’s role were dominant during this process).

The number of respondents who argued that the Islamist-secular cleavage is unimportant or takes up too much space in the political debate was substantially higher than the number of respondents who argued that the cleavage is important. Here is an example of the arguments of respondents who did not believe the cleavage to be important.

“It [The Islamist-secular cleavage] is less and less important. It was extremely cleaving between 2011 and 2013, even up to the 2014 elections because anti-Islamism was an argument in the campaign of Nidaa Tounes. [...] It’s really just electoral arguments, and afterwards when you look at important issues, such as the budget, the anti-terrorism law, the constitutional court, etc., there is no Islamist-non-Islamist cleavage” (Ounissi 16.12.2015)

Another respondent also argued that there had been a shift among the Tunisians with regard to the Islamist-secular cleavage since 2011. According to her, in 2011 the parties only talked about the “identity crisis”, asking “are we Muslims, are we not Muslims?” Then, when she participated in the electoral campaign for Afek Tounes in 2014, she felt “an enormous change in the attitude of Tunisians”, all asking “what is your economic program” instead of discussing Islamism and secularism (Fatnassi 08.12.2015). A respondent from I Watch claimed that the politicians “know how to use” the Islamist-secular cleavage, but that Tunisians are “starting to understand that the economic and security situation is as important”. Employment is more important than “details regarding religion” (Fellah 04.12.2015). Another respondent from Ennahda argued that the “problem” of “the laïque Tunisia” was a “false problem”, as Tunisia is “homogenous” and “Tunisians are Muslim”. He further argued that

“this false debate” related to secularism “deviated the revolution”, because “for us it was a revolution for employment, for freedom, it was not for ‘la laïcité’” (Sliti 05.12.2015).

Several elements are interesting in these quotes. First of all, these quotes are from respondents from both different political parties and CSOs, implying that there was no apparent pattern in who regarded the cleavage as unimportant.

Second, in the last quote (Sliti), the French terms “laïcité” and “laïque” employed by the respondent were not translated, because the difference between the French laïcité and other forms of secularism common in for example Scandinavian or Anglo-Saxon countries (examples employed by respondents) is important when analyzing the respondents’ attitudes towards secularism. French laïcité implies a strict separation between the State and religion, implying a strongly non-religious State and public sphere. For example, the educational sphere is to be completely free of religion, including garments, jewelry or other elements that are connected to religion. Laïcité is deeply embedded in the French state and in the French identity, and is generally thought to be a strong form of secularism, actively secularizing public institutions. On the other hand, the gradual secularization witnessed in other Western European countries takes on a more passive form (King 2004).

Tunisia has been under strong French influence ever since the colonization period, and still is today. It is important to keep in mind what the respondents may have thought about when they mentioned laïcité or secularism, and that it may not be the type of secularism common in Norway. In addition, several of the respondents brought up the difference between French laïcité and other forms of secularism themselves, arguing that the French laïcité is not appropriate or possible for the Tunisian society, while the passive form of secularism common in Scandinavia and other Western European countries resembles the Tunisian secularism of today. Thus, there is no need for the identity debate, since Tunisia has its own form of secularism, and the French laïcité that some secularists try to impose will never work in the Tunisian society. This is in line with Laiq’s argument that Islamist youth express concern regarding French secularism, or laïcité. However, Laiq also argues that secular youth “continue to believe in the French model” (Laiq 2013: 23). This opposes the results of this analysis, where secular youth were as skeptical to French laïcité as their Islamist counterparts.

A third element that is interesting in the quotes above, partially connected to the discussion regarding laïcité versus secularism, is how the Muslim character of Tunisia and Tunisians is

highlighted. This was mentioned earlier, with regard to the security issue and how some of the respondents related Ennahda with terrorism. In fact, half of the respondents talked about how Islam is an integrated part of Tunisia's society and culture. For some, this was an argument against French *laïcité* in Tunisia. For others, it proved that the debate between Islamism and secularism is outdated and unimportant, as there is no doubt about Islam's role in Tunisia. Some argued that there are "extremists" on both sides of the cleavage (extreme secularists and extreme Islamists), that none of them present viable solutions for the development of Tunisia, and that they are to blame for the polarization of the debate and the fact that it has taken so much place and time in Tunisian politics.

As mentioned in the second chapter (the theoretical framework), Laiq also examines this identity debate in Tunisia, arguing that "[t]he polarization between secularists and Islamists that has gripped Tunisian society and politics is also reflected in youth views. At the same time, most youth despair of the polarization" (Laiq 2013: 22). The last sentence, that most youth despair of the polarization, is supported by the discussion above. However, the first sentence, that youth views reflect this polarization, is not supported by the results of this analysis. An important difference between Laiq's study and this study, which can explain the divergence between this analysis and her study, is that Laiq's study was conducted in 2013. As Ounissi argued when quoted above, it may be that the debate between Islamists and seculars was more cleaving in 2013 than it was as of late 2015.³³

On the other hand, one element from this analysis supports Laiq's claim that the polarization is reflected in youth views; three respondents believed the Islamist-secular cleavage to be important. However, only one of them positioned herself on one side of the cleavage, arguing that she wished for secularism to be written into the constitution. It is the same respondent that cited the Islamism-secular cleavage as a motivational factor for joining politics, caused by the fear of islamization of society when Ennahda won the 2011 elections. Apart from her, none of the respondents positioned themselves on either side of the cleavage, and most advocated for a consensual approach with dialogue between the different political parties and actors as the right method in Tunisian politics. In fact, eight respondents across all parties and CSOs argued that "consensus" is important and right for Tunisia, and the only way to overcome the Islamist-secular cleavage of which they themselves were not part.

³³ This was partly due to the assassinations of oppositional secular leftist politicians Chokri Belaïd on 6 February 2013 and Mohamed Brahmi on 25 July 2013, and the July 2013 coup against former Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi from the Muslim Brotherhood (Beau and Lagarde 2014: 105, 119).

First of all, this gives strong support to hypothesis 1, as issues related to the Islamist-secular cleavage seem to be of little importance to politically active youth when they do not position themselves on either side, but rather advocate for dialogue and cooperation. Second, this implies that there is no pattern among the respondents with regard to support for either political Islam or for secularism, as only one respondent presented arguments for secularism. This contradicts Laiq's findings. She argues that Tunisian youth activists were split in two, "those who are staunchly secularist and those who think that political Islam has a rightful place in a country that is Muslim" (Laiq 2013: 22). The respondents in this analysis were not split in two, as nearly all believed that political Islam has its rightful place in Tunisia, regardless of which political party or CSOs they were members of.

Laiq's argument regarding the two opposing camps among Tunisian politically active youth is thus not supported in this analysis. However, she also argues that the divide between secularists and those who accept political Islam does not correlate with opposing or supporting Ennahda (Laiq 2013: 22). This argument seems to find more support in this analysis, at least to some extent, as some of the respondents who accepted political Islam also opposed Ennahda. One respondent claimed that he was "the enemy of Ennahda" (Ben Chebil 16.12.2015). At the same time, when only one respondent advocated for secularism, not many opponents to Ennahda are needed before it seems like there is no correlation between opposing political Islam and opposing Ennahda. In addition, the respondents who stated that they were against Ennahda were all from Nidaa Tounes, and it can be argued that it is almost in the nature of Nidaa Tounes-members to oppose Ennahda. As the respondents were not asked about their opinions regarding different political parties, it is difficult to assert all the respondents' attitudes towards Ennahda. Thus, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that, except from the respondents from Nidaa Tounes, none of the other respondents criticized Ennahda in relation to political Islam and the Islamist-secular cleavage.

In summary, the results of the analysis seem to give strong support to hypothesis 1; youth are motivated to be politically active by issues that cut across the Islamist-secular cleavage. The most important issue that motivated the respondents to be politically active was the economy, followed by change from authoritarianism to democracy, and thirdly security. A great majority of the respondents did not connect any of these issues, as well as other motivational factors mentioned, to the Islamist-secular cleavage. Only one respondent brought up an issue directly linked to the cleavage as a motivational factor, namely secularism. Thus, the

respondents' motivations for being politically active all in all cut across the Islamist-secular cleavage.

The respondents' thoughts regarding the Islamist-secular cleavage further enhance the analysis' support to hypothesis 1. A majority believed the cleavage to be unimportant or to take up too much space in the political debate. Generally, the respondents argued that there is no need for this identity debate in Tunisia, as the country already has found its specific form of secularism, with Islam deeply integrated in the society. Consequently, the French *laïcité* is not a viable model for Tunisia. Hence, in general, the Islamic-secular cleavage was not of great importance to the respondents, who rather believed that this identity debate has taken up too much space and time, and is outdated. This supports hypothesis 1.

As this summary show, the respondents seemed to agree that issues that cut across the Islamist-secular cleavage are the most important, and that the cleavage should not be a priority in Tunisian politics. The respondents from *Nidaa Tounes* were the only who seemed somewhat more inclined to be skeptical to Islamism. However, this skepticism was for the most part conceptualized by a critique of *Ennahda*, and not of political Islam in general.

The first possible answer to the second research question – what are Tunisian youth's motivations for being politically active – has now been examined and discussed. In the following section, a second possible answer will be explored: youth are politically active because of the personal gains they acquire from political activity.

5.2 Personal gains

In the analysis, personal gains are operationalized by friendship, company, sense of belonging, improved self-image or status, solidarity and career. When attempting to examine whether, how and to what degree personal gains are a motivation for being politically active, the challenge of separating what people say are their motivations for doing something from their actual or real motives arises. This is clearly the case here: it is impossible to be certain that the respondents mentioned all the factors that motivate them to be politically active, and they may have been especially inclined to omit personal gains from motivational factors as this may be regarded as an egoistic motivation with negative connotations. In addition, the respondents were not probed on personal gains, implying that in the cases where personal gains were mentioned as a motivational factor, the respondents thought about it

spontaneously. Thus, it is possible that the importance of personal gains for motivating youth to be politically active actually is higher and more multifaceted than indicated in this analysis.

The previous section demonstrated that ideological or non-personal motivations were important to the respondents. At the same time, eight respondents in some way or another mentioned personal gains either as a motivational factor for themselves, or as a possible motivational factor for other politically active youth.

Two of these eight respondents mentioned “career” as a motivational factor for themselves. The respondent from Sawty answered this when asked why he had chosen to become politically active:

“Because of timing, it was now or never for the youth. For me, honestly, I have political ambitions. [...] I have an ambition to be someone not active, but important in the political scene. It’s personal ambitions, honestly. So it’s now or never to be in an organization, [...] because in my organizational strategy, I have to be in a political party after 5-6 years in an organization” (Barkallah 07.12.2015)

This respondent thus regards work for CSOs partly as a springboard for a political career in a party. Two other respondents also argued that for some youth, political participation in CSOs can serve to gain necessary experience, training and contacts before moving on to a career in politics. However, this does not need to imply that the motivations are personal gains. Another respondent, this one from Afek Tounes, also stated that “personally, I have political ambitions, I hope to soon be a minister or a secretary of state” (Masmoudi 19.12.2015). However, later in the interview, he stated that “I have ambitions, but if I see that capable people present themselves [to high-ranking positions], I withdraw. [...] If the right people are there, it’s ok. If the right people aren’t there, I cannot watch that without reacting. That’s where my political ambitions come from” (Masmoudi 19.12.2015). Thus, it is difficult to assert to what extent personal gains were a motivation for this respondent, as he was ready to give up his ambitions if the right people become candidates. This brings up a weakness with case studies already mentioned; it is not possible to evaluate *how much* personal gains motivate Tunisian youth to be active in politics, and thus how much personal gains as a motivation affects youth political participation in Tunisia.

A respondent argued that personal gains, such as status and money, might be an incentive for other youth to be politically active, even though it was not for him. Another respondent argued that many young Tunisians are active in civil society because it offers a distraction, the

possibility to gain experience, to travel, and to be in contact with other people. The entertainment aspect is more important than the work aspect. However, these were not arguments that were frequently mentioned, and as the two respondents claimed that this was not what motivated them, it is difficult to employ this as evidence for the importance of personal gains.

Two respondents pointed at motivations for political participation that can be related to company, friendship or a sense of belonging. As one of these respondents stated, “I participated [in the January 2011 demonstrations in Tunis], but I participated because everyone else participated” (Ben Chebil 16.12.2015). He had previously stated that Ben Ali had done him nothing neither good nor bad, and that he was neither for nor against the old regime. In other words, his only motivation for participating in the protests in 2011 was because everyone else did, and not ideological. This was probably the case for many young Tunisians who participated in the 2011 demonstrations, and does not imply that they are not ideologically motivated now.

In her study, Laiq argued that many of the young Tunisian members of CSOs she interviewed “stated a desire to boost their strategic and organizational skills” (Laiq 2013: 74). This aspect was not included in the operationalization of personal gains employed in this thesis and borrowed from Russel Hardin (1982: 32-35)³⁴. However, it may be fruitful to include it in the analysis, as three respondents mentioned this aspect of personal gains as a motivational factor. Two of them stated a desire to ameliorate their capacities as a motivation for becoming politically active, while the third argued that his motivations were not political, but rather aimed at increasing his knowledge about the situation in Tunisia. Two of these respondents became politically active relatively recently, and it is thus possible to assume that personal development still motivates them to some extent. However, the third respondent became active nearly ten years ago. For him, development of capabilities did not seem to be an important source of motivation at the time of the interview.

To sum up, the analysis does not give clear support to hypothesis 2; that politically active youth are motivated by personal gains. All in all, only six out of the 20 respondents mentioned some form of personal gain as a motivational factor for themselves. Interestingly,

³⁴ Interestingly, “self-realization” and “self-development” are types of “extrarational motivations” that Hardin mentions as important in large-scale collective action (Hardin 1982: 103-112). These were not included in the operationalization of personal gains because they were not part of Hardin’s “selective incentives”.

these six respondents were all male, a possible aspect to look closer at in further research on the subject. Most of these six respondents mentioned this type of motivation as important when they decided to become politically active, without arguing that this was an important motivation today. Also, the fact that one cannot measure *how much* personal gains positively affect political participation makes it challenging to assert how strongly these results support hypothesis 2. Finally, as outlined in the theoretical framework, McCarthy and Zald (1977: 1216) argue that those who provide money, facilities, or labor to a social movement – those they call “supporters” or “constituents” – may have no commitment to or belief in the values that underlie the specific movement. This is certainly not the case in this analysis, where all respondents seemed committed to the values of their CSO or party. Thus, hypothesis 2 does not receive strong support in the analysis.

5.3 Conclusion: motivations for political participation among youth

To recall, the second sub-research question asked *what are Tunisian youth’s motivations for being politically active?* The two hypotheses presented different answers to this question. Hypothesis 1 assumed that *youth are motivated to be politically active by issues that cut across the Islamist-secular cleavage*, an assumption based on transition theory and Murphy’s definition of Arab youth. On the other hand, hypothesis 2 argued that *youth are politically active because of the personal gains they acquire from political activity*, an argument based on the resource mobilization/rational choice perspective of social movement theory.

The analysis above indicates that issues cutting across the Islamist-secular cleavage are more important as motivation for political activity among Tunisian youth than personal gains. In general, the issues the respondents highlighted as most important were not related to the Islamist-secular cleavage. In addition, the respondents for the most part argued that the cleavage was unimportant or outdated, and did not position themselves on either side of the cleavage. This implies that issues related to the Islamist-secular cleavage were not important to the respondents, strengthening the support to hypothesis 1. On the other hand, personal gains did not seem to be an important source of motivation for the respondents, although some aspects of personal gains were mentioned in the interviews. Especially the impossibility of evaluating how much personal gains may motivate politically active youth makes it difficult to give any strong support to hypothesis 2, as only one respondent stated that

personal ambitions was the prime motivation for his political activity. These results are an important and new contribution to the literature on incentives for collective action and mobilization, indicating that in a transition from autocracy to democracy, personal gains are *not* important incentives for political participation among youth.

Thus, the answer to the second sub-research question seems to be that issues cutting across the Islamist-secular cleavage motivate Tunisian youth to be politically active. This is not to say that no other factors may motivate Tunisian youth for political participation. However, the analysis' theoretical framework guided the questions asked in the interviews and hence delimited the different forms of motivation to be analyzed.

Nevertheless, an additional motivational factor that was not included in the theoretical framework, but that appeared as relatively important in the data, deserves to be mentioned here. The interviews revealed that the political position and activity of one's family could influence whether young Tunisians become politically active, and especially which political party they adhere to. Five of the twenty respondents mentioned their parents' or grand-parents' political affiliation and activism in the past as a reason for becoming politically active, and as an important influence for them when choosing which political party to become a member of. Here are some examples of how they talked about family political affiliation:

“Sincerely, my father used to be an Ennahdaoui³⁵, he was oppressed, he was in prison and all. So it was a presentiment, since I was young [to become a member of Ennahda]” (Trabelsi 05.12.2015)

“[I became a member of Nidaa Tounes] because my grand-father was a member of Bourguiba's Destourian Party. So it reflects my home. You cannot be Ennahda in my family; we always belong to the Destourian Party, thanks to my grand-father. So I cannot be in Ennahda, or in another political party. My grand-father encouraged me to be in Nidaa Tounes” (Ben Chebil 16.12.2015)

“I come from a family where my parents were in the political opposition and members of Ennahda, and we were political refugees in France. So my membership in Ennahda never really formally began at a specific time. I consider that I'm a part of the big family of Ennahda” (Ounissi 16.12.2015)

The five respondents who mentioned family political affiliation were all from political parties. This is not to say that the respondents from CSOs were not influenced by their parents; as none of the respondents were asked any questions or probes regarding family influence, this is

³⁵ A term often employed to designate members or supporters of Ennahda.

impossible to assert. However, it shows that one's family's political affiliations can play a significant role in Tunisia, with regard to political participation among youth. It could indicate that the family's political activism serves as a motivational factor for youth which is neither ideological nor directly related to personal gains. Political activism in the family could even exert a sort of pressure on youth, directly or indirectly, for instance in the form of expectations. It could also indicate that whether parents, grandparents, or other members of the family have been politically active influences whether Tunisian youth are included or excluded in politics, especially in political parties. This challenges transition theory's assumption that political elites exclude youth from politics. Instead, family relations could be decisive for whether youth have the possibility to become included in politics. Either way, the analysis here contributes with new and important insight to the literature on political participation among Tunisian youth, and political activism in the family should be an important element to keep in mind when conducting further research on the topic.

The analysis has now been conducted, and tentative answers to the sub-research questions have been presented. How does this relate to the overarching research question? This will be explored in the next – and last – chapter, the conclusion. In addition, what the analysis and its results tell us will be discussed, before concluding the thesis with an examination of how the analysis can be employed.

6 Conclusion

This chapter concludes the thesis. First, the analysis will be summarized by exploring how it relates to the overarching research question, existing literature and the theoretical framework, and how the analysis uncovers a generational narrative among Tunisian politically active youth. Then, what these results tell us will be explored, followed by a discussion regarding how the analysis and its results can be employed.

The conclusions drawn here can only be tentative, as the analysis is based solely on interviews of 20 Tunisian politically active youth, and as the analysis studies a relatively unexplored topic. This has to be kept in mind when discussing what the results tell us, and how they can be employed.

6.1 Summary: a generational narrative

To recall, the overarching research question asked *what explains the continued political participation among a minority of Tunisia's youth?* How do the results relate to this question? In general, the results of the analysis seem to indicate that politically active youth generally feel included in politics, but also believe that exclusion from politics by political elites is one among several factors that contribute to the low number of politically active Tunisian youth. In addition, issues cutting across the Islamist-secular cleavage motivates Tunisian youth to participate in politics, while personal gains do not have the same motivational effect. Based on this, a tentative answer to the overarching research question could be that political participation among a minority of Tunisia's youth can be explained by a feeling of inclusion in politics and a possibility to influence, combined with the motivation young Tunisians find in issues that cut across the Islamist-secular cleavage.

With regard to Tunisian politically active youth's perceived role in politics, the analysis thus seems to support the existing literature in some aspects, while contradicting it in other aspects. The argument presented by Hoffman and Jamal (2014), Collins (2011), Hoffman and Jamal (2012) and Banque Mondiale (2014), that Tunisian youth were interested in politics and eager to participate during and right after the revolution, but that this feeling was substituted by disinterest in and alienation from politics beginning after the October 2011 elections, echoes the arguments of a majority of the respondents. In addition, the arguments presented by

Silveira (2015), Boukhars (2015), Marks (2013), and Bonnefoy (2014) regarding the causes of this disinterest is to a relatively large extent supported by the analysis. They claim that political leaders' exclusion of youth from politics led to feelings of mistrust and disappointment among youth, and generated a generation gap as well as a feeling that the revolution has been stolen from the youth. Similarly, the respondents argued that a lack of space for youth in the Tunisian political sphere, partly caused by political leaders, contributes to the disinterest in politics among youth. However, the respondents also presented other reasons for the youth disinterest in politics, such as impatience among youth, the lack of economic and social reform, and the lack of political culture inherited from the Ben Ali regime. In addition, the respondents generally felt included in politics and decision-making, and presented several other reasons for the lack of youth in Tunisian politics that are not caused by political elites. This contradicts the existing literature. Thus, with regard to Tunisian politically active youth's role in politics, the analysis seems to support the existing literature in some aspects, while also nuancing the narrative and contributing with alternative explanatory factors, and in some aspects contradicting the literature.

With regard to existing literature on motivations for political participation among Tunisian youth, the analysis supports the literature that argue for the importance of issues that cut across the Islamist-secular cleavage (for instance revolutionary goals or economy), such as Collins (2011), Laiq (2013), French (2015), and Murphy (2012). On the other hand, the literature that emphasizes the importance of religious issues, such as Lefèvre (2015) and Marks (2013), is not supported in the analysis. Similarly, Laiq's (2013) claim that Tunisian activists are divided between those advocating for strict secularism à la French "laïcité" and those supporting political Islam, is not corroborated in the analysis.

As for the theoretical framework, the analysis suggests that transition theory is right in its assumption that if the youth feel excluded from politics by political elites, this is due to the leaders of Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes. At the same time, the discussion above indicates that Tunisian youth are not as excluded from politics as transition theory predicts. This could suggest that Boubekeur (2016) and Zartman (2015) are right when arguing that the Tunisian transition cannot be regarded as a "pacted" transition. On the other hand, transition theory receives support from the analysis for its claim that issues cutting across the traditional cleavages will preoccupy the youth. With regard to the resource mobilization/rational choice perspective of social movement theory, the analysis does not provide strong support to the

argument that “personal gains” is an important motivational factor for political participation among Tunisian youth.

What may be surprising about the results of the analysis is to what degree the respondents seemed to agree on their role in Tunisian politics and motivations for youth participation in Tunisian politics. Truly, as the analysis demonstrated, several differences existed, maybe most importantly with regard to whether youth are excluded from politics by political elites. However, in general, the respondents were fairly unanimous, also when comparing those active in CSOs with those active in political parties.

This was also the case with regard to the respondents’ visions for Tunisia. As these young politically active Tunisians most probably will rule the country one day, their visions for Tunisia are worth to mention. When asked how they wished for Tunisia to develop, or to describe their ideal Tunisia in five years, the same issues were repeated by the respondents regardless of political organization or ideological affiliation. An economically developed Tunisia with less unemployment was frequently brought up as an ideal. Additionally, several of the respondents wished for a secure Tunisia without terrorism, a Tunisia where youth are more involved in decision-making, and a Tunisia where every individual enjoys the freedom and liberty to be who she wants and say what she wants. Several of the respondents also brought up less corruption, educational reforms with emphasis on democratic learning, as well as decentralization of resources, power and decision-making when describing their vision for Tunisia. Importantly, these issues were brought up across CSOs and parties, and there was no apparent pattern linking specific issues to CSOs or political parties. Thus, it seems that Tunisian politically active youth share a somewhat similar vision for Tunisia’s development.

This is in line with the definition of youth employed in the thesis; Tunisian youth share an identity, belonging to the same “youth generation”, with all the grievances and possibilities this entails, and in opposition to the older generations. This was well captured in the quote of Ounissi (member of Ennahda) presented in the analysis, where she argues that many young Tunisians who are not supportive of Ennahda, nonetheless voted for her in the 2014 parliamentary elections, because she is young, and therefore has the same language, problems, challenges and solutions as them. Thus, they identify with her, as they belong to the same generation.

This echoes Mannheim's theory of generations, which was employed as a basis and starting point for the definition of "youth" in the thesis. Mannheim (1952: 290-303) argues that generations are formed by specific historical events that they experience, which form their modes of behavior, thoughts and feelings. This shared socio-historical context creates bonds between the members of the generation, forming their narratives of the specific historical event that formed their generation. In fact, several of the respondents stated how the 2011 revolution changed their lives, one stating that the revolution changed "a life, a person, a journey" (Garoui 04.12.2015). Thus, the analysis seems to uncover a generational narrative shared by Tunisian politically active youth, caused by the significant historical event and experience that the Jasmine revolution was. This could also be an important explanation for the continued political participation among some of the Tunisian youth; the need to let this generation's narrative be heard and influence Tunisia's future.

The analysis' results have now been summarized by giving a tentative answer to the overarching research question. In addition to indicating that there exists a generational narrative among Tunisian politically active youth, as argued by Mannheim in his theory of generations, what else do these results tell us? The implications of the analysis' results for the theoretical framework and existing literature will be explored in the next section.

6.2 What does this tell us?

As argued in the introduction, the purpose of the thesis is to fill a gap in the existing literature on youth and political participation in Tunisia, more precisely on politically active youth. Thus, the analysis can first and foremost tell us something about Tunisian politically active youth. What the results tell us about this group has already been discussed at great lengths both in the previous section and in the two previous chapters. Although the puzzle presented in the introduction (asking *what explains that, in contrast to most young Tunisians, politically active youth's 2011 "awakening" was not substituted with political passivity and disinterest?*) remains, this analysis is a first step towards answering the question.

The analysis and its results can also tell something about the theoretical framework. First of all, as argued in the previous section, the analysis indicates that Mannheim's generational narrative can be found among Tunisian youth. The theory of generations was not employed in the theoretical framework directly. However, the analysis shows how a specific historical

event, like a revolution, forms generations, especially youth generations. This creates a bond between the members of the generation, who identify with each other despite differences with regard to class, geography, ethnicity, gender, and ideology. The analysis demonstrates how the 2011 revolution in Tunisia created such an identity among youth, visible in the analysis. Whether this was the case in other “Arab spring” countries could be an interesting point of departure for developing Mannheim’s theory of generations.

With regard to transition theory, the results seem to indicate that the results do not support the claim that the Tunisian transition is a pacted transition. While politically active youth in Tunisia in some ways regard youth as non-elite, alienated and excluded from politics, this is not only the fault of the cartel of party elites, consisting of the Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes leaderships. In addition, politically active youth themselves do not feel as excluded from politics as transition theory indicates that non-elites are. However, this does not necessarily mean that the Tunisian transition is not a pacted one. It could also imply that a possible Tunisian cartel of party elites regards youth that already are politically active as a group they must include in decision-making in order to survive. Political elites may regard youth as a group that cannot be bypassed, as it was the youth that began and led the 2010/2011 uprisings, as well as the uprisings that shook the country in January 2016. Especially youth who have maintained their political activity after the majority has abandoned politics may seem indispensable for political elites’ survival, and are therefore included.

The comparisons with Nur Laiq’s study of Tunisian and Egyptian activists in the analysis could also indicate that Tunisian activists feel more included today than in 2013. This could indicate that the dynamics of a transition from autocracy to democracy as depicted in transition theory already have played out in Tunisia, and that the country now has moved one step further towards democracy. This argument is corroborated by the fact that although transition theory’s proposition that Tunisian politically active youth feel excluded from politics by political elites does not receive much support in the analysis, the theory’s second proposition, that Tunisian youth as non-elites are motivated by issues that cut across the traditional Islamist-secular cleavage, receives much support. This could indicate that Tunisian youth are part of the non-elite, as defined by transition theory, as they cut across traditional cleavages. Although they no longer feel excluded from politics by political elites, they still regard issues that cut across the traditional cleavage as the most important.

The analysis also tells us something about the resource mobilization/rational choice perspective of social movement theory. This perspective does not seem to be valid in the context of political participation in transitions from autocracy to democracy, at least not among the group that sparked the transition. Personal gains do not seem to be the prime motivation for political participation among politically active youth in Tunisia today. Instead, more ideological issues, central during the revolution, are still the main preoccupation and motivation for youth. This indicates that the resource mobilization/rational choice perspective of social movement theory is not perfectly adaptable to the political situation of a democratic transition launched by a revolution. This could be an interesting starting point for further developments of this theoretical perspective.

With regard to the existing literature on youth and political participation in Tunisia, the analysis serves as an important contribution by nuancing the literature's narrative that all Tunisian youth – also the politically active – feel excluded from politics. In addition, the analysis provides interesting information with regard to issues where there does not exist a consensus or overall agreement in the literature. Importantly, the analysis contributes to clarify whether the Islamism versus secularism debate is as important for politically active youth as it is for the political elites in the country. The analysis showed that Tunisian politically active youth in general are not preoccupied by issues related to the Islamist-secular cleavage, and rather cite issues cutting across this cleavage, such as economy, change, and security, as the most important. These “revolutionary” issues are in other words the most important motivational factors for youth political activity. This is an important factor to keep in mind when developing measures to enhance youth participation in politics. In addition, Tunisian politicians should take this into account when attempting to make youth more interested in and less alienated from politics.

In addition to telling us something about the theories employed and the existing literature, the analysis also accentuates the importance of new elements when analyzing political participation among Tunisian youth, not mentioned by the theories or by existing literature. For instance, the analysis showed how the (lack of) political culture inherited from the Ben Ali regime still influences youth's relationship to politics and their possibilities for becoming or remaining politically active. The analysis demonstrated how this is an important factor to consider when attempting to increase youth involvement in politics, for instance by fostering a new political culture among Tunisian youth. Similarly, the analysis demonstrated how the

family's political activities and affiliations can influence whether young Tunisians become politically active themselves, and even which political party they adhere to. As discussed in the previous chapter, family political affiliation could thus be an excluding/including factor for youth in politics, as it may be easier for youth who have a relative active in a political organization to become active themselves. This element must be accounted for when attempting to enhance political participation among youth in Tunisia.

To summarize, the analysis demonstrates how the context – Tunisia, and also Arab countries – and contextual factors have to be taken into consideration when conducting further studies on political participation among youth in Tunisia, and especially when attempting to create policies and guidelines for increased political participation among Tunisian youth. To conclude the thesis, this will be discussed in the next section.

6.3 How can this be employed?

As mentioned in the introduction, the analysis is based on a core assumption: if one wishes to get more youth active in Tunisian politics, an important starting point is to look at those who already are politically active. The section above gives some indications regarding how the analysis can contribute in this regard. For instance, emphasis on Tunisian political culture seems important if one wishes to enhance political activity among youth. This is also connected to the issue of lack of patience and skills among youth. The fostering a viable political culture that encourages political participation could entail political education among youth, necessary to participate in politics. Similarly, the analysis seems to suggest that a political focus on issues that are not related to the Islamist-secular cleavage, such as the economy, is an important step to get more youth interested in politics. Also, the analysis demonstrates that Tunisian political elites have to approach the youth and show that there actually is a place in politics for them. To sum up, these examples demonstrate how the analysis of politically active youth can be employed when developing measures to get more youth active in politics. In addition, although the analysis has demonstrated how contextual factors specific for Tunisia are important, lessons learned here could be employed in other countries embarking on a transition from autocracy to democracy. Surely, the importance of including youth in politics is in many regards universal.

The importance of an explorative study like this one for further research has been mentioned several times. Again, the section above indicates how the results of the analysis could be employed for this purpose. Firstly, the analysis can be employed for further development of the theories used in the thesis. For instance, it would be fruitful and interesting to conduct further analyzes regarding whether Tunisia is a pacted transition or not. In addition, transition theory's propositions concerning exclusion of non-elite actors in a transition from autocracy could be further examined in post-revolution cases. This could for example contribute to developing a more precise definition of non-elites, and even distinguish between different parts of the non-elite. Also, as the analysis shows that politically active youth in Tunisia do not seem to have personal gains as a primary motivation for political participation, the analysis gives incentives to further develop the resource mobilization/rational perspective of social movement theory. Especially interesting and relevant is the application of this perspective in the political situation of a post-revolution transition from autocracy to democracy.

Of course, the analysis enables and encourages further research on the topic itself: political participation among Tunisian youth. As this study has tentatively mapped out Tunisian politically active youth's role in politics, as well as youth's motivations for participating in Tunisian politics, further research can employ these results to study different aspects more in depth. In future research on the topic, the inclusion of more respondents, and especially the inclusion of other CSOs and political parties, such as Front Populaire, could provide interesting additional information. Also, considering the important regional differences in Tunisia, it would be interesting and fruitful to include politically active youth from *rural* areas, for example by selecting a sample that is representative of all Tunisian governorates. Finally, as this analysis discovered some differences between male and female respondents, especially regarding exclusion from politics and personal gains as a motivational factor, analyses that investigate possible differences between the sexes could generate interesting results. Additionally, the possible impact of political affiliation or activity of family members on youth political participation uncovered by the analysis should be further analyzed.

Perhaps most importantly however, the analysis and its results can be employed to increase stakeholders' and the public's knowledge about Tunisian youth and their political participation. It was discussed in the introduction why political participation among youth is important for the Tunisian democracy as well as for Tunisian youth. Increased information on

political participation among Tunisian youth is thus crucial if the Tunisian democratic transition is to stay on the right path. Additionally, the deteriorating situation in the MENA region draws attention to Tunisia as a beam of hope. However, as the January 2016 upheavals, the threat posed by the radicalization of Tunisian youth, and the number of Tunisian foreign fighters in Syria, Iraq and Libya demonstrate, Tunisia still faces enormous challenges. Both international organizations and national governments, including the Norwegian, are increasingly turning their attention to Tunisia and its youth as a group that must be focused on when facing these challenges (Speed 2016). In this context, this thesis could provide important insight into a topic too little explored.

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Appendix 1 – List of respondents

Name	Party/CSO	Date	Place (in Tunis)
Alouini, Salemme	Al Bawsala	14.12.2015	Al Bawsala offices
Arousse, Selyma	Afek Tounes	02.12.2015	Ministry of women and the family
Barbechi, Mhd. Bechir	I Watch	11.12.2015	I Watch offices
Barkallah, Amine	Sawty	07.12.2015	UTIL offices
Ben Chebil, Mhd. Jamel	Nidaa Tounes	16.12.2015	Café at Bardo
Fatnassi, Meriam	Afek Tounes	08.12.2015	Restaurant at Bardo
Fellah, Henda	I Watch	04.12.2015	I Watch offices
Garoui, Mouheb	I Watch	04.12.2015	I Watch offices
Laribi, Sabrine	Jasmine Foundation	15.12.2015	Jasmine Foundation offices
Masmoudi, Amine	Afek Tounes	19.12.2015	Café Parnasse
Ounissi, Sayida	Ennahdha	16.12.2015	The parliament at Bardo
Sfaxi, Emir	JID	03.12.2015	Café Le Richelieu
Ben Slimane, Aymen	Afek Tounes	09.12.2015	Afek Tounes offices
Sliti, Radhouane	Ennahdha	05.12.2015	Café du Grand Theatre
Taghouti, Abdelfattah	Ennahdha	04.12.2015	Café Schilling
Trabelsi, Houcem	Ennahdha	05.12.2015	Café Schilling
Ben Youssef, Oumayma	Nidaa Tounes	04.12.2015	Café Schilling
Respondent 1	Nidaa Tounes	10.12.2015	Café Charlie
Respondent 2	Al Bawsala	10.12.2015	Hotel Hana International
Respondent 3	Jasmine Foundation	17.12.2015	Jasmine Foundation offices

Appendix 2 – Interview guide

Guide d'entretien

Introduction

Ceci est un projet sur la participation politique de la jeunesse tunisienne, plus précisément sur les opinions des jeunes politiquement actifs sur la situation en Tunisie aujourd'hui, et leurs motivations pour participer à la politique. Je souhaite comparer ces éléments chez les jeunes qui participent aux associations de la société civile et chez les jeunes membres de partis politiques. Je vais vous poser des questions sur votre place dans la Tunisie d'aujourd'hui, sur vos motivations pour participer à la politique, et sur comment vous souhaitez que la Tunisie se développe. Vos réponses sont traitées en toute confidentialité.

Questions d'introduction

- Vous avez quel âge?
- Dans quel(le) association/parti politique êtes-vous membre? Vous êtes membre depuis combien de temps?
- Quelle position avez-vous dans l'association/le parti?

Sujet 1 : place dans la Tunisie d'aujourd'hui

- Décrivez votre place dans la Tunisie d'aujourd'hui.

Questions de suivi

- Avant et après 2011, changement après 2011
- Relation avec d'autres acteurs
- Exclusion
- Désintérêt politique parmi les jeunes

Sujet 2 : motivations pour participation

- Quelles sont vos motivations pour être actif(ve) dans la politique?

Questions de suivi

- Pourquoi cette association/ce parti
- Changement après 2011
- Les sujets les plus importants
- Décrivez comment vous souhaitez que la Tunisie soit dans cinq ans.

Question finale

- Souhaitez-vous ajouter quelque chose qui n'a pas encore été mentionné?

Appendix 3 – Information and consent form

Demande de participation dans le projet de recherche

« *Participation politique de la jeunesse tunisienne* »

Projet et objectif

L'objectif de ce projet est d'analyser la participation politique de la jeunesse tunisienne. Plus précisément, nous allons analyser le rôle de la jeunesse politiquement active dans le processus de transition depuis 2011, leurs motivations pour participer à la politique, et les sujets les plus pertinents pour eux. Ceci va être comparé chez les jeunes actifs dans des partis politiques et chez les jeunes actifs dans des associations de la société civile.

Le projet est une thèse de master, réalisée à l'Institut de sciences politiques, Faculté de sciences sociales à l'Université d'Oslo, Norvège.

Vous êtes sollicité(e) pour participer à ce projet parce que vous êtes jeune, politiquement actif(ve), et membre d'un parti politique ou d'une association de la société civile. Vos avis et réflexions sur les sujets mentionnés sont donc intéressants pour ce projet.

Qu'implique une participation dans ce projet ?

Une participation dans ce projet implique un entretien avec la responsable du projet, d'une durée de maximum une heure.

Les questions posées dans l'entretien vont être ouvertes, et vont porter sur des sujets comme votre place dans la Tunisie d'aujourd'hui, vos motivations pour participer à la politique, et comment vous souhaitez que la Tunisie se développe.

L'entretien va être enregistré en audio, et la responsable du projet va également prendre des notes au cours de l'entretien.

Que se passera-t-il avec l'information vous concernant ?

Toute information personnelle va être traitée en confidentialité. Seule la responsable du projet va pouvoir accéder aux données qui sont enregistrées, et les enregistrements en audio vont être sauvegardés sur une machine personnelle avec un mot de passe. Les informations personnelles vont également être sauvegardées sur une machine personnelle, séparément des données enregistrées en audio.

Dans le rapport écrit, qui sera publié par l'Université d'Oslo, seul le parti politique/l'association dont vous êtes membre sera connu. En ce qui concerne d'autres informations sur vous (nom, âge, genre, position dans le parti/l'association) c'est à vous de décider ce qui pourra être publié.

Le projet se terminera le 23/05-2016. A ce moment-là, toutes les informations personnelles et toutes les données enregistrées seront transférées sur un disque externe, seulement accessible à la responsable du projet. Les données vont être sauvegardées ainsi pour un temps illimité, mais ne vont pas être réutilisées dans d'autres publications officielles.

Participation volontaire

Votre participation dans ce projet est volontaire, et vous pouvez à tout moment retirer votre accord sans donner de raison. Si vous vous retirez, les informations sur vous seront anonymisées.

Si vous avez des questions par rapport au projet, contactez la responsable du projet Astrid Pettersen, tlf. +47 41344535, e-mail astridpe@student.sv.uio.no, ou le superviseur du projet Inga Brandell, tlf. +46 86431957 ou +46 739317402.

Le projet est déclaré à l'instance norvégienne de stockage des données *Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS*.

Accord pour participation au projet

J'ai reçu l'information sur le projet, et souhaite participer

(signature du participant, date)

J'accepte que l'entretien soit enregistré en audio

(signature du participant, date)

Cette information personnelle peut être incluse dans la publication (cochez dans les boîtes)

- Nom
- Age
- Genre
- Position dans le parti/l'association