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Does gender matter within the Tunisian civil society organizations following the "Arab Spring"? The division of labor and responsibilities among young activists

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Date of publication: October 25th, 2022

Edition period: October - February 2023

To cite this article: Desrues, T., Velasco Arranz, A. and El Bour, H. (2022). Does gender matter within the Tunisian civil society organizations following the "Arab Spring"? The division of labor and responsibilities among young activists. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Gender Studies*, 11(3), 233-262. doi: 10.17583/generos.10339

To link this article: <https://doi.org/10.17583/generos.10339>

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Abstract

This article explores the gender dimension of young people participation in Tunisian civil society organizations (CSOs) that emerged largely after the 2011 "revolution". The main aims are, first, to provide information on the Tunisian context; second, to characterize this new activism marked by a large participation of young women; and, third, to identify whether there are elements typical of a gender division of positions, responsibilities and activism work. The Tunisian case is very interesting because political transitions are crucial moments for women's rights and associations. Based on two surveys, we put forward the hypothesis that inequality between men and women in the allocation of responsibilities will increase or decrease depending on the degree of gender inequality in the possession of skills and resources (educational, linguistic, socio-economic) and previous experiences of associative socialization. After outlining the national context, we find that the profiles, resources and socialization of activists are relatively homogeneous. However, while women and men gain access to positions of responsibility with some equality via elections to the executive bodies of CSOs, male leadership prevails in ad hoc activities that grant greater individual public recognition and leadership.

Keywords: women, gender, civil society, activism, Arab Spring, Tunisia



¿Importa el género en las organizaciones de la sociedad civil tunecina tras la "primavera árabe"? La división del trabajo y las responsabilidades entre los jóvenes activistas

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Resumen

Este artículo explora la dimensión de género de la participación de la juventud en las organizaciones de la sociedad civil (OSC) en Túnez que surgieron principalmente tras la "revolución" de 2011. Los principales objetivos son, primero, proporcionar información sobre el contexto tunecino; segundo, caracterizar este nuevo activismo marcado por una extensa participación de mujeres jóvenes; y, tercero, identificar si existen elementos típicos de una división de género en los cargos, las responsabilidades y la labor del activismo. El caso tunecino es muy interesante porque las transiciones políticas son momentos cruciales para los derechos de las mujeres y el asociacionismo. Basándonos en dos encuestas, planteamos la hipótesis de que la desigualdad entre hombres y mujeres en el reparto de responsabilidades aumentará o disminuirá en función del grado de desigualdad de género en la posesión de competencias y recursos (educativos, lingüísticos, socioeconómicos) y de las experiencias previas de socialización asociativa. Tras esbozar el contexto nacional, encontramos que los perfiles, los recursos y la socialización de los activistas son relativamente homogéneos. Sin embargo, aun cuando las mujeres y los hombres accedan a puestos de responsabilidad con cierta igualdad a través de las elecciones a los órganos ejecutivos de las OSC, el liderazgo masculino prevalece en actividades ad hoc que otorgan mayor reconocimiento público y liderazgo individual

Palabras clave: mujeres, género, sociedad civil, activism, Primavera Árabe, Túnez

This article explores the gender dimension of young people participation (18-35 years old) in civil society organizations (CSOs) composed by men and women in Tunisia after the 2011 revolution.

Political transitions like the Tunisian one are particularly crucial moments for women's rights as they offer opportunities for advancement, but can also leave women vulnerable to backlash and regression (Wilde et al., 2018). Similarly, freedom of association is a good indicator of whether a regime is pluralistic and liberal or authoritarian. While Tunisia has undergone a process of political change which culminated in the adoption of a democratic constitution in 2014 and the holding of presidential and legislative elections in 2014 and 2019, on July 25, 2021, the President of the Republic, Kais Saied, suspended the parliamentary system. In the course of this last decade of political uncertainty, the women condition and associative freedom were at the core of the political and society agendas (Pérez Beltran, 2015 & 2018). The fact that in 2021, for the first time in the country's history a woman, Najla Bouden, has been appointed Prime Minister should not obscure that this is a highly symbolic appointment for a position whose powers have been almost non-existent since the suspension of the constitutional order. What is worth mentioning is that this appointment follows the pattern of successive Tunisian leaders attempting to use women's issues in order to legitimize their power. In this sense, it highlights one of the main hypotheses of our article, which is that beyond the promotion of women to positions of responsibility, this process is not always accompanied by their real empowerment, since logics of male domination can survive.

New legislation concerning associations (Decree Law No. 88 of 2011) has offered the population major opportunities for participation (Al-Farshishi, 2016), particularly the young (Mahfoudh Draoui, 2013; Desrues & Velasco, 2015 and 2021), something that has enabled the number of registered associations to double between 2011 and 2015, rising from around 9,000 to more than 18,000 organizations. The freedom enjoyed by associative activism quickly disturbed the Tunisian government, which from the 2016 to the current President, Kais Saied, tries to regain control over the funding, activities, and ultimately the foundation of associations.

Since the "Revolution" in Tunisia, a lot of studies have focused on feminine and feminist movements and associations composed of a large majority of women and led exclusively by women (Khalil, 2014a; Giulia, 2014;

Mahfoudh & Mahfoudh, 2014). A similar trend can be observed in the reports from international or national cooperation agencies (World Bank, UNDP, European Union, etc.) or Tunisian Governmental and No Governmental Organizations (IFEDA, CAWTAR, CREDIF, Réseau Mourakiboun, etc.) focused on the issue of the social, economic and political empowerment of women. These very valuable works do not concern themselves with the question of the influence of gender in mixed voluntary CSOs.

Our work deepens the path traced by some articles on mixed Tunisian protest movements such as the Right to Work Campaign (Debuysere, 2018; Barriers & Krefah, 2018), choosing to investigate young women's participation in mixed gender CSOs and seeking to uncover the ways in which the sexual division and hierarchy of labor in civil society emerged in the wake of the 2011 'Revolution'. Based on different sociological schools of thought that have focused on the logic of activism (Sawicki and Simeant, 2009), we measured the resources that individuals possess (cultural-educational, socio-relational and economic-professional) (Schlozman et al, 1994; Burns et al., 2001), which determine their position in the social structure, and we also focused on the agents and institutions of socialization and sociability or social networks (friends, family, etc.) (Verba et al., 1995; Muxel, 2010; Cicognani et al., 2012; Berriane, 2013), as dimensions that influence participation in collective actions. Then, we argue that inequality between men and women in the division of labor and allocation of responsibilities will increase or decrease depending on the degree of gender inequality in the possession of resources, previous experiences of associative socialization or associative sociability.

We also raise the question of the pathways of the gender division of labor and responsibilities. In analyzing this question, we distinguish between, on the one hand, respondents' participation and responsibilities in CSO activities and, on the other hand, respondents' responsibilities in CSO executive bodies. The first part of this article sets out the problem, its theoretical manifestation, the national context and the methodology that has been used. The second part contains a discussion of the survey results. The profile of the respondents is established and the influence of socialization on CSOs participation is ascertained. This is followed by a measurement of gendered representation in the organizations' positions of responsibility and participation in association activities.

Perspectives of gender, CSOs and the Tunisian national context

The gender relations perspective and the renewing analysis of CSOs

There can be no doubt that the gender relations perspective has been highly fruitful in terms of renewing analysis of collective action – social movements, political parties, trade unions, associations, etc.- and highlighting a range of fundamental aspects that had been overlooked or distorted in this field of study. And this is as true for Europe or North America as it is for other continents or geopolitical areas. It has consequently contributed to show the correlation between the inequality that has tended to exist in many aspects of life and the dichotomy between a public-political-civic space where men had a privileged right to access and express themselves, and a private-domestic space for the role of women. It has legitimized the struggles to incorporate equality between men and women into the participatory agenda (eg. Burns, Schlozman & Verba, 2001; Taylor & Whittier, 1998; Scott, 1992). Despite the fact that CSOs are often presented as one of the most important vectors for civic participation, social cohesion and local development (Putnam, 1993), barring rare exceptions the issues of power and inequality in the logics operating at their core have failed to attract significant sociological attention (Flahault & Guardiola, 2009; Fillieule & Roux, 2009). The few researches that have been conducted into the gendered dimension of the separation and hierarchical organization of activities and responsibilities in CSOs point out a gendered division of responsibilities and activities, giving rise to a degree of male hierarchy and domination (Dunezat, 2009). They tend to mention the spontaneity or naturalness of the assignation to women of tasks that are an extension of the roles pertaining to skills supposedly inherent to their gender, and those that traditionally fall under the domestic domain. Likewise, they justified the male leadership speaking about charisma and greater experience and relational capital as an activist. More surprising, the normalization of symbolic male domination is even observed in mixed organizations that proclaim among their objectives to be engaged in the promotion and defense of women's rights (Cervera-Marzal, 2015). In these cases, there is a sort of usurpation of women's voices by men, which explains why many feminist associations have opted to exclude men from membership. In the specific case of Tunisia, as we have underlined before it is the non-mixed type of feminist

collective action that has until recently attracted the attention of most researchers, with the consequence that the gendered dimension of mixed organizations has been overlooked.

State feminism and the hijacking of the voice of feminists in Tunisia

Interest in addressing the issue of the relationship between CSOs action and gender logics in Tunisia is perhaps even greater than in other national contexts, given that it is one of the few countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) where the authorities have pursued an official discourse for 50 years that has turned the promotion and defense of women's rights into an emblematic hallmark of the supposed modernity of their national political project (Debuysere, 2016; Khalil, 2014b). In the wake of national independence in 1956, the Tunisian authorities instituted a Code of Personal Status (CPS) that gave women a series of rights, such as the right to divorce, and eradicated certain exclusively male rights that discriminated against women, such as polygamy and repudiation (Benstead, 2019). This singular characteristic within the regional context, which legally discriminates against women, particularly in family matters (Antonakis, 2019), was applauded by Western powers and used by presidents Habib Bourguiba (1956-1987) and Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali (1987-2011) to justify repression against the Islamist opposition and stifle discordant secular voices in the process. Moreover, the same Western allies seemed unconcerned by the fact that recognition of women's rights was attributed not to women's own struggles but rather to the paternalistic figure of president Bourguiba (Marzouki, 1993), or that the president stated on various occasions that the social and professional integration of women had to be subordinate to that of men and compatible with their roles as wives and mothers. Secondly, Bourguiba's organic-centered view of Tunisian society meant that he would only countenance the National Union of Tunisian Women (UNFT) as the mouthpiece of women's demands, a satellite organization of the president's party created in 1956. Any hint of autonomy on the part of women's collectives was persecuted. This is why it was not until 1989, after the Ben Ali medical coup during the interregnum represented by the brief political transition phase brought about by the change in the republic's presidency, in November 1987, that the Association of Tunisian women for Research and Development (AFTURD)

and the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD) were officially recognized. This latter came about at the initiative of a group of feminist women who differed both from the state feminism whose organizations such as UNFT were increasingly submissive and obsolete, and from the political parties and trade unions, who failed to address their specific demands (Mahfoudh & Mahfoudh, 2014). Under the presidency of Ben Ali, the ATFD's criticisms were ill received and the clamor to stifle them grew to a crescendo with each passing year, while their activism was simultaneously presented to the country's Western allies as means of establishing the regime's liberal credentials.

Since the "revolution" of 2011, the narrative concerning the "modernity of Tunisian women" with a focus on reforming the Code of Personal Status has re-emerged on the political agenda, pitting advocates of extending the achievements secured since the country's independence against those who would prefer to return to legislation more "consistent" with the anthropological, cultural and religious reality of Tunisian society.

Women's commitment to education and participation in the labor force

In Tunisia – as in the rest of the MENA region – up until the last decade of the 20th century, the perpetuation of the patriarchy rested at least on two principle divides (Fargues, 1996), namely: the difference in age between husband and spouse – older men dominate younger women – and the difference in educational attainment – men enjoy privileged access to the various levels of education, and thus their training leads them to positions of responsibility in the various branches of professional life, of the public administration and government. As a consequence of this, the "dominant norm" was that public realm was the preserve of men for years, whereas women were restricted – albeit not passively (Stephan & Charrad, 2020; Allam, 2020) – to the domestic sphere. For the last thirty years, this system has been challenged by Tunisian women's ever greater admission to education, and in particular to higher education: nowadays, women account for two thirds of university students¹. These trends have had many consequences like the growing competition for jobs between young male and female graduates and an increase in the average age at first marriage (between 26.6 and 29 years for women 32 and 33 for men between 2004 and 2014).

By contrast with these data on the education of Tunisian women, the same group exhibits a lamentable lack of integration into the professions, revealing the existence of an adverse labor market imbued with patriarchal attitudes and assumptions. Thus, only 25% of women are part of the “official” labor force and women suffer a higher unemployment rate (22% on average 2010-2019) than men (12.5%) and the burden of unemployment weighs especially heavily on female graduates (29%) compared to their male counterparts (18%). The increasing tendency of women to stay in higher education should favor their civic and political participation, since in these areas the gender gap decreases significantly when it comes to female graduates (Abdo-Katsipis, 2017).

Women’s socio-professional and political representation

The role of women throughout the “revolutionary” winter of 2010-2011 and, in particular, of certain bloggers, has often been highlighted by the news media. In what followed however, women were marginalized in the various *ad hoc* committees that were set up after the revolution to organize the political transition, and also subsequently in the successive governments (Khalil, 2014a). Only 7% of the 1,500 nominations put forward in the weeks that followed the revolution were women. In the case of the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT), whose support for the revolution was decisive, despite 48% of its 750,000 members reportedly being women, not a single woman was included in the national executive chosen during its 2011 conference. At the following conference, held in 2017, female trade unionists had to protest and threaten a boycott in order to finally secure the election of a woman to the national executive (for the first time since independence in 1956).

The political parties too have proved reluctant to accept the principle of equality in political representation (Belschner & Garcia de Paredes, 2020). It is true that they incorporated the protection of women’s rights and equal status into the constitution of 2014 (art. 46) (Charrad & Zarrugh, 2014). In addition, the electoral laws of 2011 for the Constituent Assembly and 2014 for the Assembly of Representatives established a vertical parity system, requiring equal numbers of men and women to appear on the lists. However, the legislators rejected the principle of horizontal parity or alternation of sexes and the parity for the heads of list in the elections, so that the vast majority of electoral lists have ended up being headed by men (88% in 2011, 85% in 2014,

86% in 2019), with the consequent minority presence of women in the assemblies (22%, 31% and 22% in 2011, 2014 and 2019 respectively). Faced with these difficulties in the legislative elections, in 2017, a large bloc of women parliamentarians threatened to vote against the electoral law for municipal elections if horizontal parity at the level of heads of lists were not included. The application of this positive discrimination principle demonstrated its efficiency in securing gender fairness in the 2018 municipal elections, resulting in 47% of women being elected to the town councils.

These obstacles to female representation in the political and trade union spheres may be viewed as confirmation of the deep-seated nature of the patriarchy in the political and trade union facets of society. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that gender politics and women's rights have emerged as a central element of political discourse and action in the years following the Tunisian revolution of 2011. As the debates about women's rights, violence against women and marriage between a Tunisian woman and a non-Muslim, equality in terms of inheritance rights, etc., have shown it would be wrong to reduce female social participation in Tunisia to the feminist movement.

Methodology

This article draws on a sample of 201 Tunisian young members of CSOs (18-35 years old) obtained from two surveys taking advantage of the World Social Forum (WSF) held in Tunisia in march 2013 and 2015. According to various estimates from WSF organizers and media sources, 1554 Tunisian organizations were registered in 2013 and 1142 in 2015. 87 young people took part in our survey in 2013 and 114 in 2015. We are aware that our sample is not representative of Tunisian civil society activism as a whole. However, we believe that it is sufficiently significant to be able to point to certain tendencies under way in the CSO activism. We also believe that the fact the survey was aimed at young people aged 18-35, does not detract from the goal of discovering the existence of a gendered distribution of CSOs responsibilities and tasks. On the contrary, this type of sampling has the advantage of reducing the heterogeneity of the pool of interviewees (Desrues & Velasco, 2021), and of focusing attention on gender dimension rather than the age as the explanatory variable accounting for the differentiated behavior, opinions and responsibilities between men and women in associative life.

A large majority of both male and female respondents consider their organizations to be youthful (65% in 2013 versus 87.5% in 2015), primarily because they perceive their members to be young (64.9% in 2013 versus 68.5% in 2015%). In 2013 and 2015, more than two-thirds of the men and women interviewed started their activism in the CSO they represented after the Revolution (January 2011). In other words, most of them had been activists for less than two years. On the other hand, 4.6% in 2013 and 8.8% in 2015 of CSOs have as their first objective or scope of action the promotion or defense of women's rights so it is not very significant in both 2013 (4 cases) and 2015 (9 cases). Within these CSOs with a markedly pro-women's rights agenda, what we are interested in pointing out is that in both cases we have 50% or 44.5% men, which is a priori a rather significant and counterintuitive proportion. Within this small sample of CSOs, it can only be said that there is no greater frequency of women than men in positions of responsibility in both samples of the WSF. We can therefore say that this small sample has the advantage of not biasing our study of mixed organizations.

From a methodological perspective, a WSF provides an appropriate context for undertaking the fieldwork for a questionnaire-based study focusing on activism in civil society (Agrikoliansky & Sommier, 2005). Tunisian participation in both forums was significant, particularly that of young people. This is logical since they were held in Tunisia and therefore participation costs were low. Moreover, both WSFs were very inclusive in accepting the participation of CSOs. To register, it was sufficient to declare acceptance of the principles governing the WSF, i.e. to work against neoliberal globalization and in favor of global justice and alterglobalization. This allowed the presence of various Tunisian ideological tendencies (Nationalist, pan-Arabist, pan-Arabist socialist, Islamist, etc.) and that alongside CSOs very committed to the preparation of the WSF (defense of human rights, economic rights, women's rights, migrants' rights, movements for social and economic change, sustainable development, etc.), there were present many organizations of recent creation after the 2011 revolution with little connection to the themes to be discussed at this type of meeting. According to the observation made during the WSF, many of the latter were poorly informed and have taken the opportunity of this meeting to make themselves known, network with other like-minded CSOs, learn and discover what the WSFs are all about (Authors fieldwork). However, there is no doubt

that the ideological profile of the WSF has influenced the type of CSOs that have participated.

Although in the case of our study it is a random sample, it provides a fairly significant idea both of the profile of the CSOs present at the WSFs and of the main trends that have marked the evolution of the Tunisian associative fabric from 2011 to 2015. After the January 14, 2011 Revolution, the number of CSOs has almost doubled in four years and grew mainly in sectors such as charity associations (2211), development (1663), cultural and artistic (2846), citizenship and human rights (472) and women's rights (167) (Al Farshishi 2016). For example, prior to 2011, there were less than 9 women's associations.

In our 2013 sample, activists in CSOs with a scope of activities in promotion and defense of human rights (19.5%), defense of social and economic rights (17.2%), charity and solidarity (13.8%), youth (education, culture and sports) (12.6%), student organizations (11.5%), predominate far ahead of the promotion and defense of women's rights (4.6%). As in 2013, in 2015 the defence and promotion of human rights (14%) remains predominant, but training and empowerment (12.3%) and sustainable development (9.6%) emerge, alongside again student organisations (12.3%), the defence of social and economic rights (9.6%), the promotion and defence of women's rights (8.8%), while charity and solidarity (5.3%) shrinks.

Both surveys involved a face-to-face questionnaire administered by the interviewer in either Arabic or French depending on the language the interviewees used at the time of making contact. The authors trained the interviewer teams consisting of young people aged 21-22 years studying in the final year of the Institute of Press and Information Science. The teams were composed of 8 women and 2 men in 2013 and 11 women and 1 man in 2015. We tested the questionnaire in Tunisia before starting the fieldwork during the WSF and accompanied the interviewers during the three days of interviews with activists.

Seven thematic blocks structured the questionnaire: 1) the objectives of the CSO, the motivations to the participation, the activities carried out, the responsibilities within the CSO; 2) socialization and sociability of the respondent; 3) respondents' attitudes towards the "Arab spring"; 4) participation in elections; 5) evaluation of governments and religious belief;

6) language skills; and 7) marital status, occupation, education and socio-economic background of respondents.

Lastly, we have used SPSS two proportion z-test to look for statistically significant differences between the two survey totals, and by gender within each survey. Considering the limited size of both surveys, we have used alpha level of 0.1 (90% Confidence Interval) in addition to the stricter alpha level of 0.05 (95% CI). It is evident from this analysis that the trends emerging from one survey are usually similar to the other or with barely significant differences. The fact that the surveys were conducted two years apart renders the results more robust.

Activists with educational, economic and social resources to facilitate their participation

A relatively homogeneous elite in terms of educational and socioeconomic profiles

The sociology of activism has emphasized that activists in general, and young activists, in particular, are drawn mainly from social strata with a high level of educational capital, associated with a relatively large provision of economic capital (Schlozman et al., 1994). This phenomenon is also evident in the case of Tunisia. The interviewees do indeed possess a high level of education, given that nearly all are either in or have completed higher education (Table 1). Moreover, they form a polyglot elite (Table 1): in addition to “Derja”, the Tunisian Arabic that serves as the language of oral communication, and the typical bilingual mastery of Standard Arabic and French, most of respondents’ report speaking English. Furthermore, around a third of these young Tunisians say that they can get by in a fourth language (mainly Italian, Spanish or German). This multilingualism shared by men and women makes it possible to collaborate with international cooperation organizations present in the country since the 2011 “revolution” (Ben Mami & Gobe 2021).

Table 1
Education level and languages skills by gender

	2013		2015			
	M	W	Total	Total	M	W
Education level	%	%	%	%	%	%
First degree	2.4	2.2	2.3	-	-	-
Second degree	14.6	10.9	12.6	9.6	10.5	8.8
Higher education	80.5	87.0	83.9	89.5	87.7	91.2
NA	2.4	-	1.1	0.9	1.8	-
Languages						
Standard Arabic	78	84.8	81.6	91.2*	93.0	89.5
Amazigh	2.4	4.3	3.4	0.9	-	1.8
French	90.2	97.8	94.3	97.4	98.2	96.5
English	65.9	78.3	72.4	58.8	56.2	61.4
Others	24.3	39.1	31.9	28.8	29.8	28.1
N	41	46	87	114	57	57

M: Men; W: Women

* $p < 0.05$; + $p < 0.1$

In terms of their social provenance, the young interviewees come from the middle and upper-middle classes in Tunisia which, while not pertaining to the most powerful classes, are also far from belonging to the “lower classes” category (Table 2). Thus, the immense majority of the respondents derive from families with a satisfactory economic situation (medium-upper, upper-class), with a predominance of women in the “upper class” category compared to the men.

Apart from the individuals’ educational and cultural levels and their material living conditions, other resources also have a bearing, such as the time they have available and their autonomy to participate. In the case of the present surveys, these variables are linked to the phase of life of the young people included in the sample. In the period of their “youth” such people enjoy greater opportunities to enjoy their free time and to have varied and reversible lifetime experiences than during adulthood, a phase that is characterized by

the stability brought on by marriage, family responsibilities and professional life. The majority of the respondents in the present sample are students, applying to a greater proportion of women than men. As far as the working population is concerned, only a third of men and a quarter of women reported being in paid employment, while a minority were unemployed, with similar proportions for both sexes in 2013 and 2015, although with higher unemployment rates for the latter year. In brief, these data show that more than two thirds of the young respondents had the time to devote themselves to the associative life.

Table 2.
Socio-economic status by gender

			2013	2015		
	M	W	Total	Total	M	W
Economic situation	%	%	%	%	%	%
Rich	-	-	-	1.8	3.5	-
Upper class	17.1	37.0*	27.6	26.3	21.1	31.6
Medium-upper	53.7	52.2	52.9	60.5	64.9	56.1
Medium-lower	19.5 ⁺	6.5	12.6	10.5	8.8	12.3
Lower class	2.4	2.2	2.3	0.9	1.8	-
Poor	2.4	2.2	2.3	-	-	-
NR	4.9	-	2.3	-	-	-
Labor status						
Student	56.1	63.0	59.8	48.2	42.1	54.4
Working	34.1	23.9	28.5	29.9	33.3	26.4
Unemployed	9.8	13.0	11.5	20.2 ⁺	21.1	19.3
N	41	46	87	114	57	57

* p< 0.05; + p< 0.1

In line with their ages and the fact that many were students, the vast majority of the interviewees (90% in both surveys) were unmarried and more

than two thirds of men and three quarters of women reported living with their parents.

The data set out above suggest that we are dealing with an elite that is reasonably homogeneous from the perspective of their socio-demographic, socio-educational and socio-economic profiles. Within this elite there are some differences between men and women, but they are not highly significant.

Family and friends: the vehicles of CSO socialization

As well as possessing a specific educational, cultural and economic capital, the existence of positive associative experiences during childhood and adolescence also has a bearing on the CSO participation of young people and adults. This associative socialization helps the young people concerned to acquire skills and insights into the way social participation functions, so that, even it is not systematic (Muxel, 2010; Cicognani et al., 2012), when they leave the family home, they will have a greater likelihood of participating in associations than other members of their generation who have lacked such an experience (Andolina et al., 2003). These experiences are produced via the mediation of people in their milieu, whether family members and friends something that contributes to the intermingling of sociability and socialization. Also, associative socialization during childhood shows the parents' confidence in the educational and formative role of the associations. Prior socialization via associative experiences during childhood and adolescence was present in almost half the respondents, although it was more frequent among men than among women. No significant gender differences were detected in terms of sports, but there was a gender difference when looking at CSOs operating in the cultural-artistic field, which appear to be reserved for girls, and on the other hand, at scouts' associations, which include more boys than girls (Table 3). This suggests that, from an early age, some of the respondents are involved in distinct types of activity according to their gender; a differentiation that, as can be inferred from these data, is based on gender stereotypes.

Table 3.
Prior associative socialization by gender

			2013	2015		
	M	W	Total	Total	M	W
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Associative experiences in childhood						
Yes	58.5*	34.8	46.0	43.9	52.6 ⁺	35.1
No	41.5	63.0*	52.9	52.6	43.9	61.4
NA	-	2.2	1.1	3.5	3.5	3.5
N	41	46	87	114	57	57
Type of association during childhood						
Sports	25.0	18.8	22.5	25.5	26.7	23.8
Culture	4.2	25.0 ⁺	12.5	25.5	13.3	42.9*
Education	-	6.3	2.5	5.9	10.0	-
Scouts/camps	45.8 ⁺	18.8	35.0*	15.7	23.3 ⁺	4.8
Childhood	4.2	-	2.5	-	-	-
Youth	-	6.3	2.5	-	-	-
Environmental	-	6.3	2.5	4.0	6.9	-
Charity and solidarity	16.7	12.5	15.0	7.8	6.7	9.5
Defense of human rights	-	6.3	2.5	2.0	3.3	-
Politic	4.2	-	2.5	3.9	6.7	-
Local	-	6.3	2.5	3.9	-	9.5
Others	-	6.3	2.5	5.9	6.7	4.8
N	24	16	40	50	30	20

* p< 0.05; ⁺ p< 0.1

Apart from the influence of associative socialization during childhood and adolescence, the surveys confirm the role played by friends (Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995) and family (Berriane, 2013). The role of the peer

group among young adults is significantly more important than that of the family or other institutions, in conveying information about the organizations in which they participate and in the incentives towards their current associative participation (Table 4). It is worth mentioning that a greater proportion of women than men found out about their CSOs via: the spreading of information on “the internet and social media”, “participation with family members”, and “the presence of the association in the neighborhood”. Perhaps these three sources of knowledge regarding associations redress or are alternatives to women’s reduced freedom of access to the physical public space, bearing in mind that the latter two sources offer certain safeguards for preserving women’s honor, in a society where the presence of young women in mixed public settings falling outside the social control of institutions such as the family, the university or work continue being frequently problematic (Berriane, 2013; Barrière & Krefah, 2018).

Table 4.
Main source of knowledge about the association by gender

	2013		2015			
	M	W	Total	Total	M	W
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Family members	9.8	10.9	10.3	10.5	8.8	12.3
Friends and/or acquaintances	36.6	28.3	32.2	44.7 ⁺	47.4	42.1
Internet. Facebook. social media	9.8	15.2	12.6	12.3	8.8	15.8
University / Education centers	14.6 ⁺	4.3	9.2	9.6	10.5	8.8
Present in the neighborhood	2.4	4.3	3.4	3.5	1.8	5.3
Other associations and collectivities	2.4	8.7	5.7	2.6	3.5	1.8
At work	2.4	2.2	2.3	2.6	3.5	1.8
He/she founded the association	9.8	13.0	11.5	12.3	14.0	10.5

	2013		2015		M	W
	M	W	Total	Total		
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Another association member	4.9	2.2	3.4	2.6	1.8	3.5
Association activities	12.2	8.7	10.3	1.8	1.8	1.8
Others	2.4	2.2	2.3	0.9	1.8	-
NA	-	2.2	1.1	-	-	-
N	41	46	87	114	57	57

* p< 0.05; + p< 0.1

The present data also reveal that the respondents have many friends, particularly, male activists, and frequently family members among the members of their organization (Table 5). The involvement of this network of acquaintances thus perpetuates or prolongs the young people’s prior sociability space and contributes to removing the reticence towards associative activism that some families may have.

Table 5.
Friends and Family members in the same CSO

	2013		2015		M	W
	M	W	Total	Total		
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Friends members’ in the same CSO						
All	9.8	4.3	6.9	18.5*	15.5	12.5
Most of them	34.1	19.6	26.4	38.2	48.2	27.8
Some	39.0	50.0	44.8	44.4	40.9	37.5
Friends members’ in the same CSO						
None	12.2	23.9	18.4 ⁺	9.3	5.5	1.8
DK	4.9	-	2.3	-	-	-
NA	-	2.2	1.1	-	-	-

	2013		2015		M	W
	M	W	Total	Total		
	%	%	%	%		
Family members in the same CSO						
Yes	36.6	32.6	34.5	34.2	33.3	35.1
No	63.4	65.2	64.4	64.9	64.9	64.9
NA	-	2.2	1.1	0.9	1.8	-
N	41	46	87	114	57	57

* p< 0.05; + p< 0.1

The importance of such sociability is shown by the fact that activists often meet to talk about the association, debate or discuss current affairs, help each other, and much less frequently go shopping or play sports (Table 6).

Overall, the results do not enable dominant tendencies that are highly differentiated by the interviewee’s gender to be ruled out, although there are notable indications of the importance of gender logics in specific variables with a lesser frequency. Thus, the data set out above show that the present sample is relatively homogeneous, made up of people who, taken as a whole, belong to the same age group and social class, and share reasonably similar resources, primary associative socialization and sociability with other CSO members, with apparently no significant differences between men and women.

Table 6.
Activities with other CSO members

	2013		2015		M	W
	M	W	Total	Total		
	%	%	%	%		
Providing assistance to each other	80.5	71.7	75.9	78.9	77.2	80.7
Having some drinks and meals	87.8 ⁺	71.7	79.3 [*]	64.0	68.4	59.6

	2013		2015		M	W
	M	W	Total	Total		
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Watching TV, consulting the Internet	39.0	28.3	33.3	35.1	40.4	29.8
Talking about issues concerning the association	87.8	87.0	87.4	94.7 ⁺	94.7	94.7
Debate or discuss current affairs	90.2	80.4	85.1	83.3	89.5 ⁺	77.2
Go shopping or play sports	29.3	39.1	34.5	30.7	29.8	31.6
N	41	46	87	114	57	57

* p< 0.05; + p< 0.1

Therefore, the gender inequality in the way associations operate cannot rest on the heterogeneity of ages or resources. It is therefore worth asking to what extent it should be expected that this relative homogeneity in the profiles will reduce the discriminatory gender logics in the respondents’ associative experience, in the organizations’ leadership echelons and in the distribution of responsibilities. To ascertain this, attention is focused on two aspects: first, on participation in decision-making and on the distribution of organizational roles in the CSO when classified by gender and secondly on the discharge and holding of CSO responsibilities and activities classified in terms of the gender of the surveyed activists. The intention was to discover the possible power relations that may establish themselves within the associations among militants with similar profiles but different genders.

Leadership and the gender gap in CSOs practice work

Various studies focusing on national contexts (Tchernonog, Nogues & Tabariès, 2007), as well as the case of the UGTT trade union, mentioned above, exemplify gender inequality in terms of admission to executive bodies within CSOs. The objective of the following section is to compare the activities carried out by male and female activists and the assignment of responsibilities to men and women. A distinction will be drawn between the

activities and responsibilities that are generally included in the associations' statutes, such as the election of members of the executive board holding organizational posts, and the responsibilities and tasks that are not mentioned in the statutes, but are habitual in the way the CSOs operate.

With this distinction between organic responsibilities (members of the board) and responsibility for associative activities, we want to verify whether there is a certain gender equality or if on the contrary male activists tend to play a more important role than women in the management bodies and in the most prestigious public activities of their associations.

Participation, democracy and executive bodies: the absence of a glass ceiling

The survey data reveal the absence of a glass ceiling in election to and participation in the executive bodies of the CSOs (Table 7). From the sample, made up of the same proportion of men and women, around half the respondents report holding CSO posts of responsibility, with no major differences between the genders in either survey being apparent. Even the data of who discharges the Presidency function in the associations tend to indicate that there is no obvious discrimination against women compared to men in the distribution by gender. This is in accordance with the elitist profile of the respondents and reflects the tendency among activists to recreate social hierarchies via the co-optation or election of the best-endowed individuals in terms of educational resources and social skills.

Both the men and the women in the sample reported that their associations were highly participatory and fairly democratic organizations. In the vast majority of cases, members meet often to take decisions and in more than half of cases the respondents reported they had voted to elect the officers of the respective associations. The differences between men and women, whether in one direction or the other, are not significant. Apparently, then, the sample is made up of highly participatory and fairly democratic CSOs that do not discriminate against women in terms of access to organizational responsibilities.

Table 7
Participation and membership of the executive body of the CSO by gender

	2013		2015		M	W
	M	W	Total	Total		
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Posts of responsibility	51.2	47.8	49.4	49.1	47.4	50.9
Presidency	19	13.6	16.3	16.1	18.5	13.8
Members meet often to take decisions	92.5	95.5	94.2	80.7	82.5	79.0
Members had voted to select the officers of the association	68.3	58.7	63.2	57	57.9	56.1
N	41	46	87	114	57	57

* p< 0.05; + p< 0.1

CSOs activities: visibility and prestige for men

The CSOs included in the sample are characterized by offering the following four activities (Table 8): internal training, services for external users, organization of public meetings and, somewhat less frequently, the staging of acts of public protest. In accordance with the profile of the activities, no significant differences were observed between the genders that would suggest a specialization characterized by a certain gender bias in these activities on offer. What happens when we move from offering CSO activities to asking who takes responsibility for running them?

Table 8
Activities and tasks provided by the CSO by gender

	2013		2015		M	W
	M	W	Total	Total		
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Internal training	73.8%	82.6	78.2	64,9	71.9	57.9
Services for external users	76.1	78.3	78.2	72,8	68.4	77.2

	2013		2015		M	W
	M	W	Total	Total		
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Organization of public meetings	76.2	77.4	77.0	64,9	64.9	64.9
The staging of acts of public protest	46.4	50.0	48.2	45,6	50	38.6
N	41	46	87	114	57	57

* p< 0.05; + p< 0.1

When we ask about responsibilities and tasks performed by interviewees themselves within the CSO by gender, there are some activities that clearly involve managing groups and the assumption of a leadership role by the individual who directs them. It is in these latter activities that a striking difference can be discerned between men and women, in favor of the former (Table 9). The greater prominence of women only stood out with respect to men in 2013 in “Attendance to training activities” (76,1% versus 68.3% in 2013). In fact, the female interviewees are characterized by largely sharing with their male counterparts’ attendance at training activities, the welcoming of users and solving their problems and the drawing up of texts and reports. Women participate in routine problem management or personal training activities. By contrast, masculine prominence is significant in tasks that put most emphasis on the subject, in particular in speaking activities before an audience. In this sense, the men play a more prominent role in internal and external speaking activities with greater visibility and public impact, to the detriment of the women. Two thirds of men report having delivered a speech before an assembly, having organized or led a meeting, and more than half of them report giving training classes. In comparison, only slightly over a third of women reported having delivered a speech before an audience or given training classes and only half of them had organized or led a meeting. These tendencies suggest that men appear more frequently to put themselves under the spotlight, as well as showing a greater availability and willingness to communicate, something that enables them to personalize their activist capital. This therefore tends to corroborate the idea that, despite greater

equality in the distribution of organizational posts, the dominance of men is redirected into some associations' activities.

In this respect men appear to be the beneficiaries from the absence of written or formal rules or discretion in the assignment of responsibilities and the distribution of tasks.

Table 9
Responsibilities and tasks performed by interviewees within the CSO by gender

	2013		2015		M	W
	M	W	Total	Total		
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Organization and leading of meetings	63.4	47.8	55.2	59.6	70.2*	49.1
Voting and decision-making on meetings	80.5	78.3	79.3	85.1	94.7*	75.4
Welcoming of users and solving their problems	75.6	60.9	67.8	63.2	63.2	63.2
Attendance to training activities	68.3	76.1	72.4	63.2	64.9	61.4
Give courses and training	51.2	39.1	44.8	47.4	57.9*	36.8
Delivered a speech before an assembly	68.3*	41.3	54.0	50.0	63.2*	36.8
Organize protest demonstrations	34.1	26.1	29.9	39.5	43.9	35.1
Drawing up of texts and reports	51.2	47.8	49.4	63.2 ⁺	70.2	56.1
Voting to elect officials	68.3	58.7	63.2	57.0	57.9	56.1
Applied for a position of responsibility within the association	36.6	39.1	37.9	46.5	52.6	40.4
Contact with politicians and the public administration	61.0	43.5	51.7	57.9	59.6	56.1
N	41	46	87	114	57	57

* p< 0.05; ⁺ p< 0.1

Conclusions

This article has sought to show that Tunisia is an important case for studying young women's participation in mixed CSOs, made up of both women and men in a context of political transition marked by uncertainty. It showed that CSOs were relatively egalitarian and democratic in their functioning and leadership. Nevertheless, it has brought to light some modalities of the sexual division of labor in civil society and the perpetuation of logics that discriminate against women in an associative movement largely stemming from the "revolution" of 2011.

The results underscore some of the findings reported in the sociological literature concerning social and political activism: the activists hail from social categories endowed with educational and economic resources; have time to spare; a portion of them have been previously socialized in the associative experience during childhood and adolescence; and their friends and family play an important role in their current undertaking.

Likewise, and herein lies another important finding of this article, the authors have confirmed the trend to the perpetuation of sexual divisions in activist work and its hierarchical organization of gender, in a context of: considerable homogeneity in the activists' socio-demographic profiles; effective internal associative participation on the part of both young women and men; and women's equality of admission to organizational posts of responsibility. The data extracted from our surveys shows that it is not enough simply to address the issue of admission to the responsibilities within the CSOs and the gendered distribution of such power in order to understand the logics of gender. Indeed, it is necessary to analyze the practice, the actions and the activities undertaken by and within the CSOs to ascertain the extent to which they are led and executed equally by both genders. In this context it has been shown that beneath the apparent equality in the distribution of posts and the leadership of organizations body, in the delivery of those activities whose management, execution and responsibility is rather ad hoc and not formal, a gendered division is observed in the activists' leadership. This leads to the conclusion that the work of activists perpetuates a certain domination inherent in the gender system that is expressed by male leadership in activities involving delivering speeches before an assembly and leading meetings. The homogeneity of the group of interviewees reinforces the weight of this gender-

based discrimination and its gendered conception, thereby validating the permanence of a gendered organizational culture in detriment to the role of women in some activities. Thus, although the women in the sample have overcome the twofold obstacle of admission to associative participation and management posts, they still have to confront another type of glass ceiling. This is a more informal ceiling involving the assignation of roles that perpetuates the masculine culture and social norms of leadership and domination.

Finally, we are aware that our sample of respondents is small so these conclusions are tentative trends and that we need more representative studies of Tunisian CSOs to contrast our findings. We also need more qualitative and ethnographic studies to better explain the logics of gender discrimination. Only in this way will we be able to distinguish which elements are specific to the Tunisian context and which elements are cross-cutting and common to other national realities.

Acknowledgment

This paper presents some of the results of the research projects ‘Public problems and activists in the Maghreb. Social and political participation of young people in its local and transnational dimensions’, supported by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness [CSO2014-52998-C3-2-P] and ‘Crisis and political representation in North Africa. Institutional arrangements and protests’ [CSO2017-84949-C3-2-P], financed by the Spanish Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness (MINECO), the Spanish State Research Agency (AEI), and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF, EU).

Notes

¹See the data for the 2015-2016 academic year on the Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research website, *Indicateurs de l’Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique (2011-2016)*, http://www.mes.tn/page.php?code_menu=13 [Accessed 26-08-2020]

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