Corvinus University of Budapest
Doctoral School of International Relations and Political Science

THESIS ARTICLE

Xénia Zsuzsanna Sipos
The Role and Limits of Women's Rights Movements in Shaping the Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Processes in the Maghreb from Independence Until Present
A Case Study of Tunisia and Morocco
Doctoral dissertation

Supervisor:

Dr. Kinga Dévényi, CSc, PhD
Associate Professor

Budapest, 2022

Department of International Relations

THESIS ARTICLE

Xénia Zsuzsanna Sipos
The Role and Limits of Women's Rights Movements in Shaping the Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Processes in the Maghreb from Independence Until Present
A Case Study of Tunisia and Morocco
Doctoral dissertation

Supervisor:

Dr. Kinga Dévényi, CSc, PhD
Associate Professor

Table of Contents

1. PREVIOUS STUDIES, RELEVANCE OF THE TOPIC

The significant role of women in all fields of society in the Maghreb countries[1] has been present since their struggle for independence from the colonial powers, France (and Spain),[2] and during the state-building process of the postcolonial period. However, the events of, and following the Arab Spring brought the aspect of gender to the forefront of political and social debates which resulted in a more active role of women's rights activists. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has globally amplified and brought to the surface the difficulties of vulnerable groups, including women. However, the situation of women in Morocco and Tunisia is more complex, and is aggravated by the declining socioeconomic conditions following the Arab Spring, the ongoing political debates and political turmoil, as well as the repression of civil liberties.

1.1. Relevance of the topic

Although a wide range of literature already exists on the topic of women's rights and gender equality, most of the approaches apply one-focused research, meaning only one aspect (economic, social, historical, political or cultural) is taken into account. Thus, the complexity of the research topic is neglected. To fill this gap, the empirical part of the dissertation examines the role local women's rights NGOs played in urban and rural areas after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

---

[1] Irrespective of the various interpretations of the Maghreb region, the thesis takes this concept in a narrow sense, the so-called French Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia) which consists of countries with mutual colonial heritage, thus the author chose to analyse women's right movements in two countries of the Maghreb, Morocco, and Tunisia.

[2] The *establishment* (Morocco was an exception where both French and Spanish influence had a significant impact on the country), *nature* and the *duration* of colonial rule (44 years in Morocco, 75 years in Tunisia and 132 years in Algeria) differed in each Maghreb country, therefore it had a significant impact on the future development and identity of the given country (Willis, 2014, p. 19.).

Feminism is a complex theory that incorporates various thoughts, but in general the initial viewpoint of feminists is the absence of women in decision-making and the labour force, thus developments must be made in these fields to guarantee equal rights to women. Liberal feminists believe that women are hindered in achieving equality by the sexist division of labour. Therefore, they advocate the reorganisation or redistribution of wealth (Wendell, 1987, p. 66). Another important point is that *gender*, a term used from the 1980s to highlight the role women play in society, is a *socially constructed term*. The deconstruction and reconstruction of gender attributions is a continuous process, influenced by society and political leadership, during which existing concepts are deconstructed and rebuilt. Consequently, gender equality can be understood differently in the period of post-independence, that of the post-Arab Spring, and the pandemic. This also means that as gender roles have been shaped by the expectations of society and the interests of decision-makers (see institutionalised or state feminism), they can be reshaped during different political and economic or even religious circumstances. A good example of this is the post-Arab Spring period that intensified and prioritised the secular-religious discourse with all its consequences (e.g. increase in school dropouts).

The research topic is relevant, considering the fact that the role of women in society triggered a wide debate not only in Tunisia, but in Morocco, too. In Tunisia, this debate manifested during the drafting of the new constitution between 2011 and 2014. The question of equal inheritance and the possibility of Muslim women marrying non-Muslim men, compared with other Muslim countries, all go beyond the traditional norms deeply rooted in Islam. Furthermore, the challenges the pandemic brought about also left a significant impact on the conditions of women, which requires more profound examination.

In Tunisia, and then in Morocco, it is known, women actively participated during the demonstrations at the end of 2010 and the beginning of 2011, with high expectations about the improvement of socioeconomic conditions (especially in the labour market) and the establishment of democratic rule with the protection of civil liberties. While a great amount of literature was written about democracy-building in Tunisia, often citing Tunisia in the beginning as the only positive example of the Arab Spring, the role women played or could play in democracy-building, and the impact decision-makers could exert on the amelioration of women's rights in society, were not mentioned in detail. One of the criticisms of Robert O. Keohane on Ann Tickner's findings was a need to examine in more depth the shaping of gender patterns at the non-state actors' level. Keohane identified the impact of the socially constructed gender role on international relations as a research gap (Keohane, 1998, pp. 193-194.), where further analysis is of great importance. Similarly, to the interaction of states and sub-state actors, the researcher realised that the impact of state behaviour on sub-state actors (women's rights activists, NGOs) necessitates a more profound analysis, thus applied the *theory of complex interdependence*, *social movement theory* and *feminist identity theory* at the micro level.

1.2. Previous studies: political dimension of gender equality

Concerning the *political dimension of the question of gender equality*, previous studies aimed at finding a correlation between the foreign-policy making of a country and the dominance of certain gender roles. In this sense, the name of Ann Tickner, Cynthia Enloe, Joan W. Scott, or R.W. Connell must be mentioned. Without doubt, the appearance of feminist IR theory brought a new perspective to the discipline of international relations and posed new questions that focused on the security-seeking characteristic of state-centric order which results in oppressive hierarchies of power (Tickner, 2006, pp. 25, 40-41.).

Based on the marginalisation of women in policymaking and the presence of different stereotypes, Tickner described international relations as male-dominated, also called deeply *'gendered'*. According to Tickner, the elimination of *gender hierarchies* requires a more equal, approximately 50% of female participation at all levels of decision making, including foreign and military policymaking. Tickner emphasised that military and foreign policymaking are those fields that have always been attributed to men who traditionally represent *patriotism, strength, power, autonomy*, and *rationalism* compared with the female features of *naivety* and *weakness*. Regarding other gendered indicators, she also specified such masculine characteristics as *force*, *violence,* or *defence* (Tickner, 1992, pp. 8-9, 24, 38, 96.).

In her work, *Gender and Power*, Connell stated that the dominance of men over women is a culturally idealised form created by the society that helps to maintain patriarchal social order (Jewkes et al., 2015, p. 113.). Similarly to R.W. Connell and, Joan Scott also shed light on the fact that gendered relationships are, in fact, power relations that derive from the traditional division of roles between the sexes (*private* versus *public* sphere) which further reinforces women's inferior status in the political arena (Scott, 1986, p. 1069.). Radical feminist, Cynthia Enloe, developed a different approach when examining inequalities between men and women and, instead of analysing the causes of weak participation of women in key decision-making processes, she tried to find an answer to the *absence of women* in the fields of politics and security (Code, 2000, p. 272.). Thus, contrary to the previous arguments, Enloe stated that in fact women are present in the political and military arena, but institutional processes have always reinforced the dominance of men over women.

An important finding on the *impact of gender roles on decision-making (democracy-making)* was previously elaborated by Georgina Waylen. She stated that one of the deficiencies of examining transition to democracy is that the narrow, elitist understanding of democracy avoids the inclusion of women's role in the analysis of democracy making. In order to avoid a narrow understanding of the research topic the dissertation applied the broader definition of democracy. Waylen highlighted that political processes and institutions are clearly gendered, *masculinisation of public institutions* (Waylen, 2007, pp. 3-4.), although at the same time she underlined that women have not remained entirely outside the public sphere, as some topics (e.g. violence) could be brought to the public sphere. According to Waylen the unequal distribution of power results in neglecting the diverse interests of women as well as decreasing their chances of achieving a higher percentage of representation in political institutions. To evoke previous studies in this field, Moghadam highlighted, a women-friendly democracy not only depends on the institutional legacy of the past and the mobilisation of women's rights NGOs, but on the capacity of the government to carry out significant social and economic reforms. She did previous research on women's role in the process of democratisation in the MENA and analysed the possibilities and impacts of the mobilization of different NGOs in the region. She also stated that one of the major obstacles in achieving gender equality in the MENA lies in the repressive political culture of these countries (Moghadam, 2014, pp. 139, 141.). The dissertation analysed whether a greater inclusion of women in decision-making (e.g. increased percentage of women sitting in the national parliaments) can establish and is a sufficient prerequisite of democracy-building.

1.3. Previous studies: economic dimension of gender equality

From an *economic dimension of gender equality*, previous international treaties and follow-up conferences have already dealt with this topic in detail. The international bill of women's rights, CEDAW (*Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination of Women*) highlights the difficulties of vulnerable groups of women and attributes a significant importance to the protection of *rural women*.[3] Related to the topic of economic marginalisation the responsibilities of states in providing equality in education (decreasing the number of school dropouts), social security, free choice of work, and equal employment opportunities were also laid down.[4]

1.4. Previous studies: social and cultural dimensions of gender equality

Previous studies on the social movement theory stated that social movements, including feminist movements (also considered identity movements), are created to find answer to certain problems through the mobilisation of a large mass of people (DeFronzo – Gill, 2020, p. 27.). As a consequence, the legitimacy of NGOs lies in their ability to mobilise a large mass of people (Korten, 1990, p. 96.). Previous studies also found out that a social movement theory approach is strictly linked to the theory of feminist identity theory. In this sense, Downing and Roush's feminist identity theory shows some overlaps with the social movement theory of Oberschall. *Dissatisfaction* and *belief in the ability to trigger change* are mutual conditions for the mobilisation of non-state actors in both theories (Downing – Roush, 1985, p. 696.). These previous findings served as a basis for analysing the causes behind the proliferation of women's rights NGOs, especially in the post-Arab Spring Tunisia.

---

[3] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women [n.d.a.]

[4] *Ibid*

The cultural dimension of gender equality focuses on the evolution of women's rights in the secular versus religious discourse, to eliminate the often biased, Western approach to the question of gender equality. For secular leaders the improvement of women's rights and the modernisation process were strictly linked with each other (Bouzghaia, 2020, p. 73.). In general, there is a widespread understanding that the question of gender equality in Muslim societies was shaped by Islam and secularism and their relationship to each other. Arfaoui highlighted that the traditional practice of the religious principle is regarded as the reason behind the social and cultural inequalities of women (Arfaoui, 2007, pp. 53-55.). Previous studies about the secular-religious discourse of women's rights (Badran, Mernissi and Moghissi) highlighted the need to separate feminism in the Maghreb from Western feminism and advocated the compatibility between human rights, gender equality, democracy and Islam (Mernissi, 1991, p. 8.). According to them historical experiences reinforce the Islamic identity of women (Moghissi, 1999, p. 35.). Moghadam's categorisation of feminist movements in the region highlights the nuances in reference points. *Islamist feminism* is the traditional discourse that is built on the strict interpretation of religious texts; therefore, it rejects gender equality as being considered a Western concept. The category of *Muslim feminism* involves the secular discourse on women's rights in the specific religious and cultural context of the Middle East and Maghreb countries, while *Islamic feminism* is a middle ground between the two categories (Bouzghaia, 2020, pp. 77-78.). As gender is socially constructed the dissertation deemed it important to examine women's movements from a different angle which also takes into consideration the cultural specificities of the analysed countries.

1.5. Previous studies: historical dimension of gender equality

In her work entitled *States and Women's Rights: The Making of Postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco* (2001), Charrad described the process of state formation of the Maghreb countries in a *kin-based context* and underlined those challenges that sovereign states had to face right after gaining independence from the French colonial rule. The major challenge for political powers was the establishment of a political leadership with strong government institutions in an ethnically, tribally, religiously, and even linguistically fragmented society that was not integrated into the nation (Charrad, 2001, p. 17.).

Related to the historical dimension of gender equality, previous studies approached the concept of *institutionalised* or *state feminism* from different aspects, highlighting its positive and negative impacts. However, in general, there was a consensus about *state feminism* being a political project, a part of the state-building process that advocated the idealized image of women. Willis emphasised that in Tunisia the improvement of women's conditions after independence was more like a sign of development and modernity that the actual leadership of the country exploited to counteract the opposition (Willis, 2014, p. 75.). Later, the question of gender equality became a marginal issue. Research on the topic of *state feminism* was important for the explanation of the relationship between actors at the mezzo and macro level of analysis. It also contributed to the research question on the impact of women's rights NGOs on decision-makers (a bottom-up approach instead of the top-down one).

2. METHODOLOGY

The research topic is embedded in a complex framework that includes the *international* (macro level, international conventions), *national* (mezzo level, political actors) and *local* (micro level, nonstate actors) analysis, with different

actors at each level. The actions and interactions of the key players in the evolution of women's rights are also shaped by *different circumstances/ variables* (e.g. historical, political, economic, social and cultural factors) that will be later summarised in a figure that defines the focus of the research.

Research questions and their sub-questions centred around three major points of analysis: *the main elements that contributed to shaping women's rights at the macro, mezzo and micro level of analysis; the impact of the division of gender roles (public versus private sphere) on democracy making; and the approach of governments towards the question of gender equality. The third research question focused on the impact of crises (Arab Spring and COVID-19 pandemic) on the evolution of women's rights, and if the top-down approach could be replaced by a bottom-up one.*

Concerning the research design method, *comparative case study* was selected as it provides the researcher with a deeper and more detailed understanding of the historical, political, economic, social and cultural processes of the observed country or phenomenon. It also enables the researcher to make an interpretation of the collected data, discover similarities and differences in Morocco and Tunisia, and to answer why Tunisia is often regarded as the most progressive Arab country in terms of women's rights. Moreover, it also contributes to understanding whether the dominance of feminine attributions or roles has an impact on the democratic processes of the analysed countries. The reason for choosing Morocco and Tunisia is explained by the fact that both countries belong to the same geographic region, yet they differ in political system, social structure, ethnic composition, and the role of religion in the private and public spheres. Further consideration of the researcher was to select a liberal (Tunisia) and a middle ground (Morocco) example to compare.

As for data collection, *qualitative data* was used in the empirical part of the thesis to reveal the research topic in depth. However, as certain phenomena could not be understood without a numerical relation, *statistical data was also applied* to explain certain phenomena (e.g. unemployment rate, illiteracy rate, percentage of women in national parliament). Regarding qualitative data, the twenty interviews (one and one and a half hour long interviews) conducted with women's rights activists and representatives from different women's rights NGOs in Morocco and Tunisia enriched the quality of the research, especially during the period of the pandemic that urged the researcher to find an alternative solution and reach representatives online. In addition, based on previously unseen data, interviews helped the researcher to arrive at new results. Qualitative data was processed with the method of *template analysis,* that is a deductive approach to process primary data through coding. Themes were developed before the conduct of interviews in order to be later collected in a template (Brooks – King, 2014, p. 4.). Finally, conclusions drawn at the end of interviews were compared with the initial codes. The sampling method used in interviews is *judgmental sampling*, which is a non-random sampling based on the researcher's perception (Westfall, 2009). This means that NGOs were selected purposely based on different criteria (e.g. the availability of the organisations or, their location). *Semi-structured interviews*, a combination of unstructured and structured interviews were used during qualitative data collection. In addition to a set of the same open-ended questions that were elaborated before the research, and are found in the appendix of the dissertation, the researcher developed unplanned questions depending on the characteristics of each individual.

Both *inductive* and *deductive methods* were applied in the research. The *deductive method* enabled the researcher to conclude the main findings from the relevant theories on the given level of analysis and transplant them into the

Moroccan and Tunisian case studies. As for the *inductive method*, it helped the researcher to arrive at the main conclusions and, based on the empirical verification and the collected data, set up a theory about *how* different circumstances (attitude of the leadership to the question of gender equality), different actors, the given historical period and, crises, can influence the stance on gender equality.

Regarding the methodology, the research topic was examined from two aspects: the process of constructing gender roles (*top-down approach*) and the impact of non-state actors on decision-makers (*bottom-up approach*). Since research questions were also formulated according to the question of '*how*' and *'to what extent'*, it is clearly shown that the analysis aims to find an answer to the causes of certain processes. Consequently, the research is qualitative, and *process-tracing* was selected as a research method. The following proposals of Creswell regarding qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2009, pp. 163-164.) also justify the selection of process-tracing:

1. The research investigates a phenomenon that must be analysed in its nature, in the framework of fieldwork (*Note: unfortunately, owing to the restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic fieldwork had to be replaced by other methods of analysis realised in online form*).

2. Regarding data collection, the researcher relied on the analysis of the literature and interviews. The results are summarised in a systematic way using diagrams. Besides deductive methods, theory is set up due to empirical testing.

3. As the questions of gender roles and the approach of governments and women's rights NGOs are seen as a constant deconstruction and rebuilding process, the research actively contributes to shaping these

norms. Therefore, the main conclusion of the research is the result of a construction based on the bottom-up initiative.

4. In the research a complex analysis method in applied. This approach enables the researcher to examine all the circumstances (political, historical, economic, social, and cultural) together. During the examination, the researcher follows a continuous interpretation and reinterpretation of the collected and analysed information.

The applied qualitative research method, process-tracing, enabled the researcher to trace the whole process, the evolution of women's rights in Morocco and Tunisia. Moreover, as Bennett and Checkel explained, process-tracing incorporates both inductive and deductive methods of analysis (Bennett – Checkel, 2015, pp. 17-18.), therefore it suited the logic of the research. On an *historical level* the correlation between the political establishment of the country was examined, on a *political level* the approach of the leadership towards the question of gender equality (top-down or bottom-up approach) and the democratisation process were explored, while on the *social and cultural levels* the mobilisation of women's rights activists and organisations were analyzed.

Defining the focus of the research
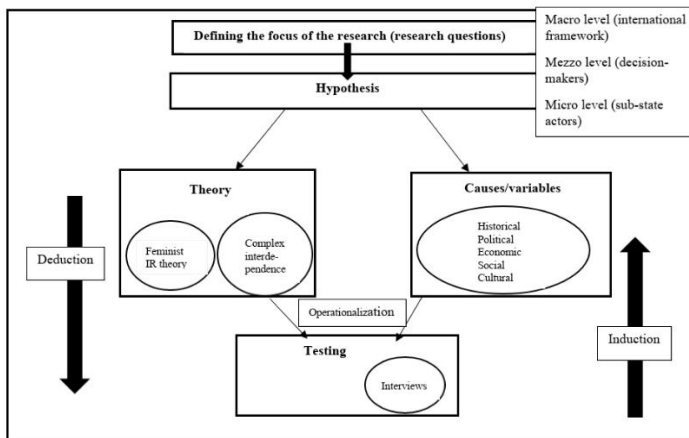
Following the review of all the relevant theories, the researcher drew consequences from the theoretical corpus which were then tested in the empirical part of the dissertation. With the exception of the macro level, where major concepts related to the research topic are explained under the literature review, the research relied on the main findings of *feminist IR theory* (Tickner, Scott and Enloe) and the *gender order theory* of Connell at the mezzo level. From a feminist point of view, the political orientation states pursue on an international relations level was traced back to the traditional division of gender roles. The researcher introduced the fact that state behaviour at the international level is reflected in domestic policy-making. In order to examine how socially constructed gender roles shape the decisions of political leaders the *theory of complex interdependence* (Nye and Keohane) was applied at the micro level. The process of the construction and reconstruction of gender roles was explained through the *social movement theory* of Oberschall and the *feminist identity theory* of Downing and Roush.

The method of *induction* helped the researcher to answer the research questions, summarise the main findings and conclude new results. Empirical analysis was realised in the form of twenty interviews (ten interviews from each country). Among the thirteen NGOs involved in the research, six were consulted from Morocco: *High Atlas Foundation* (three interviews), *La Voix de la Femme Amazighe (The Voice of the Amazighe Woman), Without She I Would Never Be a He, Coalition ISRAR pour l'Empowerment et l'Égalité* (*ISRAR Coalition for empowerment and equality*), *Association Ennakhil* (*Ennakhil Association*) and *Association Épanouissement Féminin (Women's Development Association).* Besides questioning representatives and presidents of Moroccan civil society, questions were posed to two independent women's rights activists, a former delegate-minister for women conditions, family and children

protection, minister-delegate for the Moroccans living abroad, ex-ambassador of Morocco to Canada, and the president and founder of the Rabat-based Africa Women's Forum. In Tunisia the following seven NGOs were involved in the analysis: UNFT (*Union Nationale de la Femme Tunisienne, National Union of Tunisian Women*) in Kelibia, l'*Association Patrimoine pour l'Economie Solidaire* (APES, *Heritage Association for Solidarity Economy*), AFTURD (*Association of Tunisian Women for the Research on Development*) where two interviews were conducted, *Ligue des Électrices Tunisiennes* (*League of Tunisian Women Voters*), *Association Citoyenneté et Libertés* (ACL, *Association for Citizenship and Liberties*), *Association Jlij pour l'Environnement Marin (AJEM) Djerba (Jlij Association for Marine Environment)* with two interviews and the *Association Amel Ghizen (Amel Ghizen Association)*. The last interview was also conducted with a Tunisian activist whose work is well recognised outside the boundaries of Tunisia, she is a member of the Women, Peace and Security Committee of the African Union and active in different Tunisian women's rights NGOs, among them UNFT and AFTURD.

The questions posed during the interviews included the *objectives of the associations*, the *future challenges in light of the pandemic*, intra-state and regional *cooperation with other NGOs*, and the *biggest constraints for achieving gender equality.*

3. RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

Based on the research questions, the scientific results of the dissertation are summarised in three bigger blocks: the first one contains conclusions on the major elements that contribute to shaping gender roles in all levels of analysis, including their relationship to each other. In the second point, the researcher

summarises the results about the impact of the traditional division of gender roles on democracy-making and its consequences on decision-makers when approaching the question of gender equality. Thirdly, conclusions are drawn from the role of crises as possible factors in reinforcing solidarity among women's rights activists and NGOs in light of the theories of social movement and feminist identity and feminist IR theory.

3.1. Findings on key factors in the evolution of women's rights

Keohane has highlighted that socially constructed gender roles have a crucial impact on state behaviours. At the same time, he also mentioned that this field requires further research. It is important to underline that the dissertation did not make a distinction between gender roles shaping the foreign-policy and domestic-policy orientation of the analysed countries. Thus, it supposed that the same traditional division of gender roles (public versus private sphere) are responsible for determining state behaviour. The empirical verification of the dissertation proved the following findings:

- *From the political dimension* although states are bound by the supranational framework of women's rights (i.e. international conventions and regulations adopted during follow-up conferences), some of them restricting their freedom to manoeuver, reservations provided room for these states to set up their own gender policy.

- *From a social and cultural point of view*, interviews proved that the evolution of women's rights in Morocco and Tunisia does not exclusively depend on traditions and cultural norms but on the level of education. Statistical indicators also proved this finding which explains why Tunisia has always been ahead of Morocco in terms of the development of women's rights (in Morocco the illiteracy rate reached 60% among women living in rural areas). Stereotypes about cultural

differences being a barrier to gender equality were also overwritten by representatives of associations with headquarters in Djerba (e.g. Amel Ghizen, AJEM, Ligue des Électrices Tunisiennes) and other rural women's rights NGOs in Morocco (e.g. HAF, Ennakhil) who demonstrated a quite open attitude during the interviews.

- *Regarding the secular-religious discourse* on women's rights, interviews proved that despite Ennahda advocating a progressive approach to gender equality (Islamic feminism), the re-emergence of Islamists after the Arab Spring brought about a significant increase in school dropouts. Compared with Tunisia, where Ennahda was repressed by the political power from the 1990s until the Arab Spring, the situation in Morocco was quite different. In Morocco, the main Islamist party, PJD (*Parti de la Justice et du Développement; Development and Justice Party*), was gradually integrated into the policy making of the country. As a consequence, contrasting and harsh debates between the secular and religious sides in the post-Arab Spring period were not as apparent.

- From a *socioeconomic point of view*, interviews proved that economic disparities not only touched women living in rural areas, but women in cities, too. Unemployment in general is extremely high among the younger generation with an average of 35.8% unemployment rate.

- From *a historical perspective*, the division of society from an ethnic, tribal and linguistic point of view determined the government's attitude towards the question of women. (See the early centralisation of power in Tunisia that prepared the way for a top-down approach to women's rights).

3.2. Findings at the micro-mezzo and mezzo-micro relationship: women and democracy-building

The feminist IR and gender order theories clearly proved that international relations are strongly *gendered*. So is the case with policy-making at the domestic level.

- *Regarding the micro-mezzo relationship,* the dissertation proved that the absence of good governance leads to general disappointment among local people towards decision-makers. This anarchical situation reinforces the recognition of women's rights NGOs that in some regions quasi fill the position of the government. This is what happened during and right after the Arab Spring.

- With a strong initiative and collaboration of sub-state actors the traditional division of gender roles can be transformed and women can infiltrate into the public sphere. However, such efforts only last until all circumstances (political and economic) are given to this transformation.

- *Regarding the mezzo-micro relationship*, historical experiences in Tunisia showed that the evolution of women's rights has always taken place in a strongly controlled manner (*institutionalised or state feminism)* in which leaders often use women's rights as a political card to play against their opponents.

- Contrary to the criteria of the CEDAW about the number of women in national parliament, the research proved that the percentage of women sitting in the parliament and in government positions is not an adequate indicator to measure the success of women in democracy building. Interviews also confirmed that the key is raising gender awareness.

3.3. Findings on the role of micro-level actors: a bottom-up approach?

The dissertation sought to examine to what extent sub-state actors can influence state behaviour. The research supposed that crises in general would encourage women's rights activists and NGOs to pursue a more active cooperation. Although previous studies built on the analysis of the impact of state behaviour on gender inequalities, the shaping of gender roles at the *micro level (individuals, non-state actors)* was identified as a research gap. Interviews not only enriched the quality of the research, but based on previously unseen data they also helped the researcher to arrive at new results. The results of the research in the third point of analysis can be summarised as follows:

- *Contrary* to the general perception, interviews proved that solidarity among women's rights NGOs is more apparent in the marginalised regions of Morocco and Tunisia. On the island of Djerba local associations (e.g. Amel Ghizen) started a widespread mobilisation to provide assistance to victims of violence and buy necessary tools to fight against the pandemic.

- Interviews proved that there is a strong will from women's rights activists to cooperate with regional partners, but due to limited capacities (including financial difficulties, too) and domestic problems, women's rights NGOs prefer local collaboration.

- The Arab Spring and the pandemic established a favourable environment for civil society to play a more active role and exert pressure on decision-makers. However, socioeconomic conditions (political turmoil in Tunisia, foreign indebtedness, the increase in the unemployment rate) overwrote initial expectations and the bottom-up approach was blown in the shade.

4. BIBLIOGRAPHY, MAIN REFERENCES

Primary sources

Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2022. Morocco [n.d.]: *Official website*. https://freedomhouse.org/country/morocco/freedom-world/2022 (Retrieved 21 October 2022)

Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2022. Tunisia [n.d.]: *Official website*. https://freedomhouse.org/country/tunisia/freedom-world/2022 (Retrieved 6 October 2022)

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women [n.d.a]: *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*. https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm#article14 (Retrieved 22 October 2021).

Secondary sources

1. Books

BENNETT, Andrew – CHECKEL, Jeffrey T. (2015): *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

CHARRAD, Mounira (2001): *States and Women's Rights. The Making of Postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco.* University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles.

CRESWELL, John W. (2009): *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches.* Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.

MERNISSI, Fatima (1991): *Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry*. Basil Blackwell, Oxford.

MOGHADAM, Valentine M. (2015): "*Modernising women and democratization after the Arab Spring*". In: KHALIL, Andrea (eds.): *Gender, Women and the Arab Spring*. Routledge, London & New York.

MOGHADAM, Valentine M. (1997): *Women's NGOs in the Middle East and North Africa*: *Constraints, Opportunities, and Priorities*. In: CHATTY, Dawn – RABO, Annika (eds.): *Organizing Women*, pp. 23-55. Routledge, New York.

OBERSCHALL, Anthony (1997): *Social Movements: Ideologies, Interests, and Identities.* Transaction Publishers, London.

WAYLEN, Georgina (2007): Engendering Transitions: Women's Mobilization, I*nstitutions, and Gender Outcomes*. Oxford University Press, New York.

2. Journal articles

DOWNING, Nancy E. – ROUSH, Kristin L. (1985): From Passive Acceptance to Active Commitment: A Model of Feminist Identity Development for Women. The Counseling Psychologist. Vol. 13, pp. 695–709.

KEOHANE, Robert O. (1998): Beyond Dichotomy: Conversations Between International Relations and Feminist Theory. International Studies Quarterly. Vol. 42, pp. 193–198.

MUNTEANU, Anca (2020): Les militantes du Parti de la justice et du développement au Maroc et d'Ennahda en Tunisie : formes d'engagement et d'organisation. Égypte/Monde Arabe, Vol. 21, No. 1, pp. 69-88.
https://www.cairn.info/revue-egypte-monde-arabe-2020-1-page-69.htm
(Retrieved 10 August 2022).

SCOTT, Joan W. (1986): Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis. The American Historical Review. Vol. 91, No. 5, pp. 1053–1075.

TICKNER, J. Ann (1992): Gender in International Relations. Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security. Columbia University Press, New York.

WAYLEN, Georgina (2010): A Comparative Politics of Gender: Limits and Possibilities. Perspectives on Politics. Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 223-231.

WENDELL, Susan (1987): A (Qualified) Defense of Liberal Feminism. Hypatia. Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 65–93.

3. Other studies

BRECHENMACHER, Saskia – HUBBARD, Caroline (2020): *Le movement Ennahda en Tunisie*. In: BRECHENMACHER, Saskia – HUBBARD, Caroline (2020): *Rompre le cycle de l'exclusion dans la création des partis politiques.* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
https://carnegieendowment.org/files/BrechenmacherHubbard_Tunisia_FR.pdf
(Retrieved 10 August 2022).

5. LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Publications in Hungarian

1. *Journal articles*

SIPOS, Xénia Zsuzsanna (2021): *A gazdasági marginalizáció és a szélsőséges ideológiák iránti fogékonyság közötti kapcsolat* (The relationship between economic marginalization and receptivity to extremist ideas). Külügyi Szemle (Foreign Policy Review), Vol. 20, No. 3., pp. 199-226. DOI: 10.47707/Kulugyi_Szemle.2021.3.7

Publications in other languages

2. *Books, book chapters*

SIPOS, Xénia (2020): "*The Origins of Tunisia's Women's Rights Movement: A Social Movement Theory Approach*", pp. 170-183. In: SZERÉNYI, Zsuzsanna – KAPONYI, Erzsébet – BENCZES, István (eds.): *Contemporary global challenges in geopolitics, security policy and world economy*. Budapest, Corvinus University of Budapest, International Relations Multidisciplinary Doctoral School.

SIPOS, Xénia Zsuzsanna (2021): "*Gender equality as a sustainable goal in the Maghreb? Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria compared*", pp. 54-70. In: SZERÉNYI, Zsuzsanna – SALAMIN, Géza – NEMES, Zsófia (eds.): *Environmental, social and economic sustainability in the light of the geopolitical challenges of our age: Papers of early career researchers and PhD students from the Doctoral School of International Relations and Political Science*. Budapest, Corvinus Geographia, Geopolitica, Geooeconomia.

SIPOS, Xénia Zsuzsanna (2022): "*Tatawwur huquq al-mar'a fi Tunis: muqaraba min aala il asfal aw min asfal ila aala?*" (The evolution of women's rights in Tunisia: a top-down or a bottom-up approach?), pp. 87-91. In: African Studies Center: *Maqalat Afriqiyya 2022* (African Articles 2022). Karbala, Department of Intellectual and Cultural Affairs at the al-Abbas's Holy Shrine.

2. *Journal articles*

SIPOS, Xénia Zsuzsanna (2020): *A Case Study of Tunisia's Path to Radicalization: A Lost Generation?*. SUSURGALUR: Jurnal Kajian Sejarah & Pendidikan Sejarah, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 1-26.

https://journals.mindamas.com/index.php/susurgalur/article/view/1286
(Retrieved 23 October, 2022)

SIPOS, Xénia Zsuzsanna (2021): *Evaluating the impact of COVID-19 on women in Morocco and Tunisia*. Afrika Tanulmányok (African Studies), Vol. 15, No. 4, pp. 17-36. DOI: https://doi.org/10.15170/AT.2021.15.4.2

SIPOS, Xénia Zsuzsanna (2022): *Dawr al-mar'a fil-Maghrib wa-Tunis* (The role of women in Morocco and Tunisia). Al-Mustaqbal Al-Arabi, Vol. 45, No. 522, pp. 69-87.

SIPOS, Xénia Zsuzsanna (2022): *Women's role in the Tunisian process of democratization*. AARMS – Academic and Applied Research in Military and Public Management Science, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 69-85.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.32565/aarms.2022.2.5

SIPOS, Xénia Zsuzsanna (2023): *Dawr al-munazzamat ghayr al-hukumiyya al-ma'niyya bi-wad' al-mar'a fil-Maghrib wa-Tunis* (The role of women's NGOs in Morocco and Tunisia). The Arabist. Budapest Studies in Arabic, No. 45. (In print)