

كسر القوالب Breaking the mold

#Breaking_The_Mold

Arab Civil Society Actors and their Quest to Influence Policy-Making

Country: **Morocco**

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The State vs. The Unemployed Graduate Movements in Morocco | Rachid Touhtou |

BACKGROUND

The National Association of Unemployed Graduates of Morocco (ANCDM) founded in 1991 connects all graduates with a baccalaureate or a higher diploma, and comprises some 100 local sections with a total of 3,000 members. Today, the ANCDM is not the only actor demanding jobs. From the mid-1990s onwards, different groups of 'Diplomés de Troisième cycle' (Masters and PhDs), including engineers and graduates with a handicap, appeared on stage (Bogaert and Emperador, 2011) in various groups called 'tansikiyat.'

In the 1990s, the movement was very active in different local branches, organizing sit-ins, hunger strikes and protests; with the first government of Alternance in 1998, the movement started to mobilize its activists in Rabat, because the unemployed argue that Morocco is still a very centralized system and any employment decisions should emanate from Rabat, the country's capital. The movement intensified during historical moments that served to encourage their activism, mainly during the pro-democracy moments from 1999 until the start of the Arab Spring. They mobilized strategic discourses of human rights to make their cause appealing to different actors. The battle from 1999 until now is the open space of the parliament in Rabat, mainly Mohamed V Avenue, which is a symbolic and historical place. The ANCDM is a legally-recognized national association with branches all over Morocco, even in small towns and villages. National coordination is done from Rabat, and the general assemblies, both nationally and locally, are the structures taking decisions. The ANCDM founders were mainly from the radical left; these are activists who graduated with Bachelor of Arts in the late 1980s and started activism to pressure the government to create employment for them in the public sector.

TIMELINE

The first protests of the unemployed graduates started in the late 1980s (Bennani-Chraïbi, 1995). They often took place outside the headquarters of institutions under the Ministry of the Interior (provinces and bashaouiyat), believed to have the power to decide on the recruitment of civil servants due to the political weight of the aforementioned departments. In 1991, the first association of unemployed graduates with a national character was born; the ANCDM brings together graduates of secondary education and beyond (Belghazi and Madani, 2001).

Since the second half of the 1990s, the holders of master's and doctoral degrees have organized in specific groups focusing on Rabat, and demanding the implementation of Ministerial Decrees 865/99 and 888/99 of the Ministry of Public Service. These decrees are meant to establish direct hiring without exams to 11 scale items (maximum) in the administration for graduates. The lifecycle of the groups of unemployed postgraduates follows a similar pattern: creation of intensive protests in the capital, negotiations with authorities and dissolution following the hiring of group members. Since 1997, more than 20 groups of graduates leading waves of successive protests broke and then disappeared (Emperador, 2007).

In August 2007, the prime minister signed an integration agreement for 2,760 postgraduates (The Economist, 2007 and Today Morocco, 2007). A month later, protests erupted, and were led by those excluded from this agreement and the new training groups. In November 2008, five groups of graduates conducted public protests and negotiations with representatives of the prime minister and the Ministry of Interior: four groups of senior unemployed resulted in 600 members from the merger in March 2007 of four groups, namely Annasr, Moubadara, Hiwar and Istihqag; Coordination- Tansikiyat – and senior unemployed doctors (450 members from the reunification, in September

2007, 16 groups on national and regional levels); Tajammou Moroccan – senior unemployed executives (750 members after the merger in November 2007 to Mouwahada and Federaliya); Fatiya (180 members), and finally Cho'ala (150 members, Master-level graduates). Diplomas represented include both literary and science disciplines. The male-female ratio is almost equal, with males having a slight majority (about 55 percent). Male dominance is overwhelming in the groups, often composed of activists with experience in lobbying political parties or student unions.

CIVIL SOCIETY ACTOR'S ROLE AND INVOLVEMENT

Supported by the press, human rights organizations, and trade unions, the unemployed often gather in front of the parliament, but they also protested in front of other buildings. They also block roads, and sometimes organize hunger strikes; the most desperate ones have burned and poisoned themselves.

TRADE UNIONS

- Trade unions also play a major role within the conflict. The Union Marocaine du Travail (UMT) allows the unemployed to gather in the UMT building, with the purpose of bringing together and uniting the different groups of unemployed. According to a UMT staff member, the movement of unemployed graduates will be stronger if they work together as one group. He claims the government divided the unemployed, in order to weaken their protest¹.

HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS

- Another organization that sympathizes with the unemployed is the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH). The human rights organization was established during the years of lead; the years where there was opposition to the late king Hassan II; it was known for arbitrary detention and political assassination. During that time, the government was very harsh on the organization, but nowadays, the AMDH is very critical about the government. The AMDH plays an important role in four different areas. First, they inform students and demonstrators about their rights as citizens. Second, members of the AMDH go to the meetings between the authorities and the unemployed graduates as eye-witnesses. Third, the AMDH has introduced people to each other in order to improve the organization and mobilization of the protests (they have for example introduced members of the UMT to the 'secretariat general' of the unemployed), and the organization has made its building available for the unemployed to meet and gather. Finally, AMDH plays an important role in situations where demonstrators get injured or arrested. If the authorities use violence against the unemployed, the human rights organization writes reports about the incidents and sends them to the government, the press, and to other human rights organizations. If anyone gets arrested, the organization immediately gathers information and approaches the minister of foreign affairs, the minister of justice and the minister of state security. They try to get in contact with the media. Most of the time, those arrested are freed by paying a deposit, but sometimes, they are jailed for a few months².



STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

These unemployed graduates have recourse to various strategies to get a job; the primary strategy is to join the movement, to enroll in the lists and to participate in the protests in order to increase their opportunities to find a job. The strategy available for the unemployed depends on their family, friends and professional networks; the unemployed whose family is supporting them, has connections abroad and has an influential family network, so they do not feel the same pressure as the unemployed whose network and social belonging is very weak.

One unemployed graduate says that, "I just want to work. I need money...I am from a very poor background and my family waits for me to care for them, to feed them and support them but unfortunately I could not; my parents were disappointed from my studies and my joblessness." We met other unemployed whose families provide sufficient support and they have never protested because they believe that self-employment can be a very successful endeavor. An interesting case is Hamid; his case shows that tactics of having good family networks is sometimes very helpful to get out of joblessness. Hamid tells his story on unemployment:

- "I was an unemployed graduate for four years; then I have my sister in Laayoune in the South of Morocco; she informed me that they will offer 'Sahraoui' unemployed graduates jobs in the public sector; she told me to join her and then they will help change my ID address so that they register me in the list and then get a job; this is what happened exactly. It was in 1999 with the Alternance government led by the USFP; we joined the ANCDM local section in Laayoune as unemployed from the unemployed of the Center of Morocco; the Sahraoui activists presented two lists to the Ministry of Interior, one for the Sahraoui and one for the unemployed of 'dakhil', meaning from the center of Morocco. We got a job and it was signed by A.Youssoufi, the prime minister at the time."

1 From the interviews conducted during the fieldwork with the unemployed groups.

2 From the interview conducted for the fieldwork with a member of a human right NGO.

Regarding other strategies of the unemployed movement mainly during and post-Arab Spring, we can cite the following³:

- The internationalization of the movement's cause (lobbying the European Union to put pressure on the Moroccan government to recruit them): several groups organized sit-ins in front of the EU headquarters in Rabat and in front of foreign embassies, and presented collective migration applications to several embassies, mainly the Canadian one.
- They sued the government of Party of Justice and Development (PJD) due to their refusal to recruit them, as signed with the last government led by the Istiqlal Party in the April 2011 Agreement.
- Participation in all international days (such as March 8, May 1) for visibility and recognition.
- Use sensitive political topics to advocate for their cause (like the privileges given to Sahraoui citizens in the south of Morocco. When I conducted the interviews, many unemployed activists told me that some unemployed traveled to the southern provinces and changed their national ID and address to get jobs in these provinces, as there is a regional system of public sector recruitment. There is also the use of this information to pressure the governments to have equal treatment like the unemployed in the southern provinces.
- Occupying headquarters (of political parties and ministries) and blocking main roads like Med V Avenue in Rabat.- Using social media to make their cause known, to show the repression by the authorities and to make their suffering known (Facebook, Twitter and blogs).
- Using symbolic actions, like: putting their IDs for sale, threatening the government with massive migration, sit-ins in front of the CNDH, and using foreign languages to internationalize their case.
- Hunger strikes, sit-ins, petitions, and local protests.
- Advocacy through political parties and labor unions to defend their cause.

INFLUENCING FACTORS OR POLICY WINDOWS

The unemployed graduates movement did not join the 20 February movement but only the national committee in support of the 20 February movement to make it clear that the unemployed movement does not have a political agenda; during my fieldwork (in several occasions in 2013/2014 and in 2018, with members of the Masters Tansikiyat in cities, such as Rabat and Khemisset), we asked several leaders of the movement and they kept repeating that they are fighting for the right to get a job in the public sector. For them, their demands are 'matalib khobzia', meaning 'bread demands'; second, state policies targeting unemployment in Morocco either wish to integrate the unemployed in the public sector by offering them jobs or to control them by either co-opting their leaders nationally and locally, or using them during elections ("Annajat" Scandal with the government led by the Istiqlal Party in 2002). State policies also employ the use of repression and force against them to deter them from protesting. The Annajat was an Emirati company of marine shipping that offered through the National Agency of Employment (ANAPEC) to recruit about 80,000 young unemployed Moroccans. During that time, Minister of Employment Abbas El Fassi was responsible for this scam. There was one condition for recruitment, which is physical aptitude, which is why the company imposed a medical certificate of aptitude. Abbas El Fassi used the potential candidates for the post during the Istiqlal Party's legislative campaign. These potential candidates have to pay about \$100 USD to a private clinic to get the certificate; some potential candidates told me that a relative of the minister owned the private clinic. One of the consequences was the suicide of four potential candidates and Abbas El

³ These are based on field notes and media coverage.

Fassi going on to win the 2007 legislative elections; the king consequently appointed Abbas El Fassi as prime minister.

The government of "Alternance" led by the Union Socialistes des Forces Populaires (USFP) and the 2011 government led by PJD tried to build trust both politically and socially in order to create an atmosphere of confidence. However, the burden of the employment file is difficult to manage, bearing in mind the high rate of unemployment among young people, the high rate of school drop-outs, and the inability of the Moroccan economy to create enough jobs to absorb the masses of the unemployed people⁴. The unemployed young people expressed their anger against the state's retreat from the 'social', their disappointment in a diploma that does not guarantee any security in the future, and the dismantled image of corrupted state actors, politicians and elected representatives.

TRANSFORMATIVE MOMENTS

The discourses of the unemployed young people reveal ambivalent strategies of public persuasion and sympathy; the unemployed graduates' discursive arguments to get a job in the public sector with no quota, no exams and being paid in line with their degrees, and colored with a universal discourse of human rights. In addition, exploiting an openness towards democratization and using the 2011 social protests to their advantage, reveals an urgent need to reform education, to change the designing and the implementation of public policies, and to frame 'reforms' in a discourse and strategy that takes into account social cohesion and well-being of individuals. The discourse of the unemployed graduates put several pressures on successive governments to find solutions to unemployment. The first transformative moment was the massive recruitment in 2007 by the Istiqlal Party, which was leading the 2007 government. The second transformative moment was the refusal of the 2011 government led by the PJD of the aforementioned direct recruitment. Both moments pushed the unemployed groups to actively demand jobs through street protests.

POLICY OUTCOME

Throughout the history of relations between the movement and the state in Morocco, several options were put into practice; first, co-opting leaders of the movement and providing jobs for them; second, disorienting or discrediting the movement from their main demand, for example, by providing trainings or defaming their reputation; third, repression and issuing threats. On the other hand, the movement bargained through these policies for visibility, recognition and representation. Successive governments resorted either to creating massive job opportunities for the unemployed graduates, using the unemployed during election times as volunteers or stock voters, or trying to combine public recruitment with private initiatives. From independence until today, two major policy outcomes dominate:

- Active labor market policies: This policy aims at increasing the level of employment directly through job creation or indirectly through vocational training;
- Passive policies: this policy aims at reducing social exclusion of the unemployed through financial compensation and reducing the job of adapting the law to changing job profiles of suppliers (e.g., part-time and early retirement).

⁴ - Lahcen Achy (PPT), (2011), "Youth Unemployment in Morocco: Roots, Risks and Responses", in Carnegie Middle East Center, Beirut. Retrieved from the website: http://carnegieendowment.org/files/Lahcen_Achy20%Compatibility20%Model.pdf

THE MAJOR ONGOING PROGRAMS FROM 2005 TO TODAY ARE:

ANAPEC was established in 2000; its main mission is to “contribute to the organization and implementation of programs to promote skilled employment decided by the government.” It provides mediation between suppliers and job seekers and develops programs for employment promotion. Since its inception, three programs to promote employment were created: Taehil, Idmaj and Moukawalati. Since 2006, governments proposed three major programs aimed at improving the employability of job seekers through two areas; the first decision was to improve access to employment in the private sector and the promotion of self-employment.

One of the major policy outcomes was the creation of massive contractual recruitment within the Ministry of National Education in the 2016 government. A large number of young unemployed graduates were trained and recruited as contractual teachers to absorb the high numbers of the unemployed young people, which resulted in a massive movement refusing contractual jobs and calling for full-time jobs.

CONCLUSION AND LESSONS LEARNED

One of the major lessons learned from this social movement and its impact on public policies can be summarized in the following points. First, the movement has played a big role in pushing successive governments to take unemployment as a serious destabilizing factor in social cohesion. Second, it succeeded in bringing the issue of unemployment to the forefront of public policies in Morocco in the last ten years. Third, the young unemployed people ‘voluntarily choose’ (Bourdabat, 2005) to search for work in the public sector. All in all, the demographics and economics have pushed the current government to introduce contractual jobs to absorb the high numbers of unemployed young graduates, however, it seems to have failed in the last 2016 government led by the Islamist party PJD, after the massive protests led by contractual teachers in 2019.



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BREAKING THE MOLD PROJECT

In mid-2018, the “Civil Society Actors and Policymaking in the Arab World” program at IFI, with the support of Open Society Foundations, launched the second round of its extended research project “Arab Civil Society Actors and their Quest to Influence Policy-Making”. This project mapped and analyzed the attempts of Arab civil society, in all its orientations, structures, and differences, to influence public policy across a variety of domains. This research produced 92 case studies outlining the role of civil society in impacting political, social, economic, gender, educational, health-related, and environmental policies in ten Arab countries: Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Yemen, and the Arab Gulf.

Over two dozen researchers and research groups from the above countries participated in this project, which was conducted over a year and a half. The results were reviewed by an advisory committee for methodology to ensure alignment with the project's goals, and were presented by the researchers in various themed sessions over the course of the two days.

THE CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS AND POLICY-MAKING PROGRAM

at the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at AUB, examines the role that civil society actors play in shaping and making policy. Specifically, the program focuses on the following aspects: how civil society actors organize themselves into advocacy coalitions; how policy networks are formed to influence policy processes and outcomes; and how policy research institutes contribute their research into policy. The program also explores the media's expanding role, which some claim has catalyzed the Uprisings throughout the region.

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