The needs of labour in times of transition: a case study of sharecroppers in Tunisia

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Abstract

Transformative justice has emerged in recent years as both a critical response to transitional justice and as a new practice agenda for challenging social-economic harms in post-conflict and post-authoritarian societies. While the transformative scholarship is relatively new, it falls short of providing a way to capture the underlying mechanisms by which people's needs are frustrated. This study explores this epistemological gap through an examination of the everyday injustices, grievances and priorities for change among a group of sharecropping farmers in Cap Bon, Tunisia. A critical realist philosophical and methodological research framework was adopted, and a total of 42 semi-structured interviews were conducted and analysed using techniques from grounded theory. The examination reveals a set of unmet or frustrated needs among this group of people that arise from their insertion into particular social relations that subjugate and exploit them. Enduring social structures and their properties are analysed for how they a) underpin need frustration among this particular group; b) act as a source of resentment directed towards local actors and the state; and c) shape farmers' priorities for change. The study contributes to the development of an approach for examining the causes of enduring social-economic harms experienced by groups and communities in transition societies, and for generating new knowledge about relations and structures in concrete cases that might become objects for transformative change. Through this process, transformative justice is reconceptualised in terms of a wider body of theory, moving transformative theorising away from a narrow focus on its critical response to transitional justice and towards knowledge development for transformation.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Parts of chapters 3 and 4 (methodology), chapter 8 (discussion) and Appendix 1 have been incorporated into a manuscript and submitted to the International Journal of Social Research Methodology for peer review.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1   Introduction: Research background

This thesis explores the unmet or neglected needs of a community of farmers in Tunisia as the country transitions away from repression towards a more democratic form of government. While commonly regarded by analysts as the lone success story of the Arab Spring, lingering forms of depravation and inequality remain largely unresolved in the fledgling democracy. Grievances which led to the uprising of 2010/11 and which have common roots in country's agrarian structure remain alive and acute, and include rising tensions over agricultural resources, food prices, discontent around increasing production costs, farmer indebtedness, and a lack of employment opportunities (Gana, 2011; 2012; 2013; 2016; Ayeb, 2012; Bush and Martiniello, 2017). These are linked to complex processes operating at higher scales: to transformations in the global food regime (McMichael, 2013a) and new forms of integration into the global economy; the IMF- and World Bank- inspired restructuring of the country's agriculture since the 1980s; and to the promotion of development strategies at the national level that have favoured the development of coastal regions at the expense of the interior (Gana, 2012; 2013). The renewal of social mobilisation, especially since 2015, has come as a response to the failure of new economic opportunities to materialise, with actors organising around demands that the state address persistent poverty and unemployment and improve access to resources and services (OST, 2017).

Like other transition societies, Tunisia has embarked on a process of transitional justice for examining and formulating solutions to a legacy of civil and political rights abuses and economic crimes committed over several decades. Yet coming to terms with the complex and complicated legacies of economic and social injustice is not exhausted by the mandate of the Tunisian Truth and Dignity Commission (IVD), which is tasked with investigating past injustices.[1] The narrow mission of the IVD, shaped by an international normative framework and effected in and constrained by a fractious domestic political climate (Lamont and Pannwitz, 2016) foregrounds the limits of the country's transitional justice process as a tool for grappling with the full extent of depravation and inequality that continue to fuel popular grievances. As the work of the IVD unfolds, a set of debates continues to percolate within the international transitional justice community about whether the scope of existing practice should be widened to encompass more ambitious, 'transformative' outcomes like poverty alleviation and structural change.[2] This thesis aims to give content to this emerging

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[1] The mandate of the IVD is to investigate abuses between 1955, when Habib Bourguiba's rule was just beginning, to December 2013, when the bill on transitional justice was adopted (Preysing, 2016).
[2] Franzki and Olarte (2014, p.203) suggest the significance of transitional justice scholarship to practice lies in "its efforts to provide legal, political, philosophical or moral concepts that back the

'transformative justice' agenda by moving toward a transformative justice 'epistemological agenda' for examining the causes of enduring social-economic harms experienced by groups and communities in transition, and for generating new knowledge about relations and structures as possible candidates for transformative change.

The field's 'transformative turn' (McAuliffe, 2017) is presently comprised of several currents that have sought to redraw the boundaries of existing practice towards more 'transformative' outcomes. Those advocating more 'transformative' modes of transitional justice have examined and made the case for expanding the remit of existing mechanisms in several respects: by making transitional justice more development-sensitive (Duthie, 2008; 2014; de Grieff and Duthie, 2009; Selim and Murithi, 2011); by prioritising economic, social and cultural rights violations (Muvingi, 2009; Cahill-Ripley, 2014; 2016); addressing subsistence harms (Sankey, 2013); making existing mechanisms 'victim-centred' (Robins, 2011a; 2012; García-Godos, 2013); and by moving beyond retributive and restorative approaches towards distributive justice (Mani, R, 2002; 2008; Alexander, 2003; Aguirre and Pietropaoli, 2008). Gready and Robins (2014a; 2014b) meanwhile have suggested an alternative, 'transformative justice' practice agenda operating alongside transitional justice which is conceived of as a form of activism for delivering justice in transition (also Gready and Robins, 2017; Boesten and Wilding, 2015; Lambourne, 2009; Lambourne and Carreon, 2016). In contrast to 'transformative' transitional justice, transformative justice suggests shifting the emphasis away from legalistic and state-centred mechanisms and solutions towards social actors, communities and civil society as change agents in "the challenging of unequal and intersecting power relationships and structures of exclusion at both the local and the global level" (also Gready and Robins, 2017; Boesten and Wilding, 2015).

Several reasons have been put forward for widening the scope of practice along these general transformative lines. In the first instance, more ambitious agendas for practice may align better with the felt needs and priorities of people after conflict or repression. As findings from various studies have suggested, needs and priorities in transition societies tend to be set the within injustices of the everyday, or the "less visceral slow violence of starvation, unemployment and poverty" (McAuliffe, 2017, p.2), as opposed to extraordinary instances of political violence. In the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo for instance, survey studies found respondents prioritising security and survival needs such as health and food/water to a significantly higher degree than transitional justice emphases on prosecutions and reconciliation. Similar findings have also come from other surveys conducted in northern Uganda (Pham et al., 2007), Liberia (Vinck et al., 2011), and Cambodia (Pham et al., 2009).

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practice of transitional justice and investigate strengths and weaknesses of different mechanisms in their capacity to support transitions to more liberal societies."

Pham et al (2009, p.2) observe in Cambodia for instance that "justice was seldom mentioned" as a priority by respondents and that "two thirds said it was more important to focus on problems that Cambodians face in their daily lives rather than address crimes committed during the Khmer Rouge regime." Similar findings have also come from more exploratory studies drawing on qualitative methods. Robins' studies in Nepal and Timor-Leste for instance found families affected by violence tending to emphasise needs for economic support, and for private truth about the fate of the disappeared and access to remains, over requests for judicial processes (Robins, 2011a; 2011c; 2012; also Robins, 2011b on Kenya).

Secondly, more ambitious modes of practice may move towards addressing the underlying sources of grievances that threaten a renewal of conflict and violence and which frustrate transitions to democracy. As a wealth of studies has suggested, lingering forms of depravation and inequality can play a fundamental role in conflict dynamics (Christie, 1997; Gready, 2010; Gready et al., 2010; Bergsmo et al., 2010; Elster, 2010) as a source of grievances and group identities which leaders use for mobilisation and recruitment into violent movements and armed groups (Thoms and Ron, 2007; Mason, 2004; Vallema et al., 2011; Cramer and Richards, 2011; McAdam, et al., 2004; Huggins, 2009; Hanstad et al., 2009; Gready and Robins, 2014a). With civil and political violence usually serving as the visible 'triggers' of conflict (Thoms and Ron, 2007), advocates of more transformative modes of practice suggest a need to address underlying causes rather than the symptoms of conflict (Gready and Robins, 2014a). As well as a source of violent conflict, depravation and inequality rooted in the rural economy has become identified with the recent rise of authoritarian populism that "circumvents, eviscerates or captures democratic institutions, even as it uses them to legitimate its dominance, centralise power and crush or severely limit dissent" (Scoones et al., 2017, p.3).

Lastly, the view that all rights are equal and indivisible makes redress for social and economic injustices intrinsically valuable. Carranza (2008, p.313) suggests there can be "mutually reinforcing impunity" for rights violations across different categories, while failing to engage with economic and social rights, Szoke-Burke (2015, p.473) argues, merely "perpetuates anachronistic conceptions of ESRs as lower on the hierarchy of rights".

1.2   Research problem and aims

The transformative literature has succeeded in raising the profile of social and economic issues in transition societies and of making the case for *why* practice should respond to these. Its theorising has contributed to the development of a critical response to transitional justice, one which is directed primarily towards the international transitional justice community and its values for reshaping practice (McAuliffe, 2017). This study is in agreement with the reasons

for adopting more transformative modes of practice and is supportive of this general call for pursuing more ambitious outcomes, but it theorises in a different way and in a different direction. Rather than contribute further to the turn's critical response, this study theorises with questions of 'doing' or effecting transformation in mind - questions about which the literature up has had little to say till now. It does this by developing a response to a general problem within that transformative literature: that it is limited for empirically examining and accounting for the causes of unmet needs. Two issues stand out.

In the first instance, the 'root causes' of harms have been left largely unexamined, meaning that the literature offers little for unpacking and generating new knowledge about the causes of unmet or frustrated needs among populations, communities and groups. Harms are acknowledged as complex and as potential drivers of social conflict and violence, but there is little in the literature that has sought to unpack them, their social origins and their relationship to the state and state processes through empirical studies that might contribute to theory building. This represents an 'epistemological gap'. The response of this thesis is an 'epistemological agenda' that can be located alongside its practice agenda, and which allows for greater understanding of the causes of harms in concrete cases in transition societies and which lays out how these can be identified and examined through social scientific inquiry. This first issue is then one of *how* we go about identifying the sources of societal harms and *where* transformative change might be effected in practice.

The second issue is that what is meant by 'transformation' in the transformative literature is vague and undertheorised. In fact, the strength of the term appears to lie in its rhetorical power than in its analytical value. It is conceptually limited for empirical research concerned with root causes and transformation because it tells us nothing about what social change is and how it happens, as well as why change *might not* happen and why states of affair may persist. This is a symptom of a broader problem within the transformative turn that it lacks a definite approach to social ontology. Despite there being a substantial social theoretical literature about transformation and emancipation, little, if any, of the literature comprising the transformative turn has engaged with it. One significant effect is the transformative literature has given little consideration to how agents' capacities for action are shaped or constrained by their social-political contexts. Instead, institutions, groups, organisations and movements are construed as able to effect change in a relatively straightforward fashion while appearing themselves to operate in a structural vacuum. A further aim of this thesis is to clarify theoretically the dynamics underpinning the persistence and transformation of harm-generating structures and their relationship to human agency for how they contribute to the epistemological agenda and for what implications these might bring for practice. Given that this research is oriented towards the study of transition societies, and is funded for these reasons, transformation is

considered narrowly in this study in relation to transition societies and post-repression/post-conflict practice.

1.3   Research questions

A set of research questions are developed and applied to the case of sharecroppers and their needs on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain in Cap Bon, Tunisia. The focus on sharecroppers is in keeping with the community-oriented approach of transformative justice that focuses on the "collective experiences of structural and systemic violence" (Gready and Robins, 2014b, p.1), while a focus on 'needs' keeps within a common transitional and transformative justice emphasis on the needs and rights of people or 'victims' in transition societies. Two main research questions are as follows:

- What are the needs of sharecropping farmers on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain? Why are their needs frustrated?

The first question requires a response that is descriptive while the second requires a response that is explanatory and causal. The case study location is included here for reasons of precision since the study does not intend to generalise from the sample to all sharecropping farmers in Tunisia. Generalisations are rather sought internally, meaning the sample is representative of other sharecroppers on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain, and externally in terms of its relation to theory. A response to these main research questions is addressed over the course of several sub-questions which map onto the methodology and findings chapters of this thesis. Chapter 2 (literature review) and Chapter 5 (historical analysis) do not have specific research questions mapped onto them, and they instead labour across the research questions.

- How can the causes of need frustration be examined?

This research question is addressed in Chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 3 outlines a critical realist philosophical and methodological framework and its value for generating causal explanations by examining people's everyday experiences and the underlying relations, structures, conditions and mechanisms which make events occur. Chapter 4 describes the methodological design of this thesis and how the research was implemented. The approach outlined is one which applies critical realism with techniques from grounded theory (GT). It aims to first look for empirical evidence of need frustration in the form of experiences of suffering and priorities for change and second to theorise particular societal arrangements that generate these events.

- What evidence is there for the frustration of particular needs?
- What are sharecroppers' grievances and priorities for change?

These research questions are addressed primarily in chapter 6 and concern the empirical, 'concrete' dimensions of need frustration and priorities for change among research

participants on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain. The sub-question about grievances and priorities for change is presented and addressed here rather than at the end or in a separate chapter. This is because we require participants' assessments of the situation, of why things are 'not working' and what needs to change, for helping to generate an understanding of unmet needs. This is made possible because participants' descriptions of their livelihoods and difficulties are *evaluative* as well as descriptive.

- What are the mechanisms and conditions under which these needs are frustrated?

This research question is addressed primarily in Chapters 7 and 8, and marks a transition from the 'concrete' experiences on the plain (Chapter 6) towards more abstract theorising of societal arrangements and their effect on need satisfaction or frustration. Chapter 8 integrates the research findings from Chapters 6 and 7 to generate a set of propositions that respond to the main research questions by way of a causal explanation.

1.4   Contributions

The case is the first intensive study of the needs of poor farmers in a country transitioning to democracy, and which is set in the debates about post-conflict and post-repression practice. The findings support the re-emerging significance of class in rural poverty studies by documenting how class mechanisms of exploitation and subjugation have consequences for need frustration, which includes the psychosocial as well as material dimensions of need. The findings add as well to the literature on rural contract making by moving it beyond evaluations based on purely material factors towards consideration of other, less tangible factors like autonomy and recognition that are part and parcel of rural exchanges.

For the transformative turn, these findings contribute by drawing out the significance of social context and social class as mediators of need satisfaction in transition societies. This value of this lies in allowing the extent of need frustration to be more fully understood; in raising the profile of particular relations, structures and mechanisms and their continuities over periods of repression to periods of peace; and getting to grips with structural and relational antagonisms that can facilitate or underpin social conflict and violence, and more recently authoritarian populism.

The overarching contribution this study makes is to reconceptualise transformative justice in terms of a wider body of theory through a process that addresses the identified research problems. The effect of this move is to give further content to transformative agendas for change that begins to overcome a general problem raised by McAuliffe (2017, p.167) that transformative justice remains "defined not by what it is, but what it is not, less an imaginary of structural reform or redistribution than a critical response to the field's inattention to wider systemic issues." This study makes a number of significant contributions in this regard. First,

it provides a framework and approach for a transformative justice 'epistemological agenda' to complement its existing practice agendas. This takes the form of a critical realist philosophical and methodological framework emphasising the structured and stratified nature of social reality and the possibility of establishing causation in open systems. Brought together with methodological techniques from GT, it provides a means of generating new knowledge through a process that moves from people's everyday experiences towards the deeper social relations, structures and mechanisms at play in the satisfaction or frustration of their needs. As a problem-based mode of inquiry, the approach involves drawing on existing theoretical knowledge on the basis of how it helps conceptualising the range of social phenomena under consideration and is used alongside empirical evidence for making retroductive inferences about causes.

Insights from social theory, namely the adoption of Roy Bhaskar's 'transformational model of social activity' and Margaret Archer's subsequent elaboration of it, resolve some of the conceptual ambiguities around transformation and social change. This allows for a description of harm-generating structures in terms of the intentional and reiterated activities of the particular agents implicated in them. Distinguishing between structural reproduction as continuity in the status quo, and structural transformation as the modification or replacement of relations, directs research and practice towards an agenda that pursues the transformation of harm-generating structures through work that activates, expands or strengthens the powers or capabilities of structurally disadvantaged people. As well as suggesting this definition of transformative justice, the study further moderates some of the more voluntaristic accounts of transformative change by highlighting how local populations, communities and groups as the envisaged agents for change do not operate in a structural vacuum, and that there are likely to be a whole host of structural barriers that stand in the way of transformation.

1.5   Scope and limitations

The thesis adopts an 'intensive' research approach with a focus on the micro level dynamics of need frustration, meaning sharecroppers on the plain and their immediate social and political context. The explanation generated is a highly local one, with the structures, mechanisms and processes operating at higher scales given less attention. While it identifies and draws on known macro-level trends and processes as having a role in the causal explanation developed in Chapter 8, these are not the primary objects of study. Other trends and processes at higher levels are not explored directly - it is not clear for instance what effect competition between capitals is having on the dynamics of labour exploitation. A further limitation at the micro-level has to do with the class-focus of the explanation. While part of the novelty is in finding social class to be an important mediator of needs, people generally have a wide set of needs whose satisfaction or frustration is not determined or shaped

exclusively by class relations. People are host to other 'determinations' which interact with class, such as gender, ethnicity and generation, or which exist apart from class altogether. This account deals with class as one set of determinations and in isolation from other relations with which class is known to intersect. These are not problems insofar as the limits of this research are recognised however, and points to the importance of further research that i) integrates studies of local social dynamics with studies of patterns and processes at other scales and ii) which takes these findings as a starting point to explore differentiation in need satisfaction on the plain through examination of intersecting relations that make some groups worse off than others.

The study has further downplayed the contributions from two disciplines that have been most dominant in the field of transitional justice, namely law followed by political science. This has been a choice driven by the research problem: contributions to the scholarship from these traditions have been organised around the accountability and democratisation goals of transitional justice rather than around questions of social transformation, while the rural poverty studies literature, as the substantive area, is highly interdisciplinary (political economy, peasant studies, development studies, human geography and social theory). Much of the novelty of this thesis has come from moving away from these traditions in favour of more inter- or multi-disciplinary fields that draw on these disciplines.

1.6   Structure

This chapter has briefly reviewed the development of agendas for more transformative modes of practice and identified a number of issues within that literature that have led to the research objectives and research questions of this study. Chapter 2 examines the limitations of existing scholarship (identified briefly in 1.1 above) before moving on to examine and reflect on sets of concepts that this thesis will work with. The chapter discusses competing conceptualisations of 'need' and implications for social research, and it looks at how need has been applied in poverty studies. The chapter draws out important relational concepts from some of the critical literature which are useful for a critical realist exploration of need frustration in the study.

Chapters 3 and 4 concern matters of methodology. Chapter 3 introduces the critical realist (CR) philosophical and methodological framework, beginning with a short description of critical realism as a philosophy of social science before moving on to a broader discussion of some of key elements of a CR approach: its epistemological assumptions, its focus on causation and explanation, ontology, open and closed systems, and the importance of hermeneutics for social research. This chapter also discusses the relationship between structure and agency, and its implications for structural reproduction and structural

transformation. A high level of detail provided in this chapter is necessary because of the novelty of the approach and the rarity of applied critical realist studies more generally. Chapter 4 describes the methodological design and how the research was implemented as an 'intensive' and 'concrete' case study employing techniques from GT. It outlines what an abductive or retroductive research design implies in practice and the form that the literature review takes. The pre-fieldwork preparations are discussed followed by an overview of data collection, ethics and informed consent.

Chapter 5 provides an historical analysis to the case on the understanding that context and history are part of any causal explanation, and that adequate explanations cannot be developed in isolation from them. The main relevant themes it draws out are the switch from subsistence farming to production for market and integration of subsistence producers on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain into a system of generalised commodity production; the role of the state in agricultural development and state regulation; and the retreat of the state in the context of market liberalisation and agricultural restructuring. Chapter 5 helps contextualise and historicise the findings in Chapters 6 and 7 and contributes to the development of a causal explanation in Chapter 8.

Chapter 6 provides an account of the needs and priorities of sharecroppers on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain as our phenomenon of interest. It refers to several forms of physical and psychological suffering that have been revealed through qualitative data coding, which in CR terms indicate causal mechanisms are active and producing effects. These provide evidence for the frustration of four abstract general needs which are introduced and described in the chapter as the need for social-economic security, for relatedness, for esteem and self-worth and for self-realisation. Research participants expressed a range of views about changes they would like to see as a way of ameliorating their circumstances, and a summary of priorities for change is provided.

Chapter 7 describes the social relations, or structures, which play a causal role in the forms of suffering described in the previous chapter. This chapter examines three main structures which are of causal interest on the plain and unpacks them in terms of their relations and the key causal powers and liabilities that inhere in them. The first is the landlord-tenant relation which underpins sharecropping as a system of agricultural production and is the basis of wealth extraction in the form of rent. The second structure comprises internal relations around farmers and private sector 'suppliers' on the plain which control access to other productive resources, such as seeds and fertilisers, and is the basis of a different mode of exploitation based on debt and interest. The third set of relations refer to those between farmers and industry on the plain, where sharecropper production has been incorporated into commodity chains that link farmers

to consumers through agri-food processors and private storage bodies. These relations, which are the basis of a third mode of exploitation based on resource extraction and profit-making, see the delivery of farmers' produce to industrial and commercial actors on the plain who store or transform it into new products that acquire higher value over time or as they are moved along the commodity chain.

Chapter 8 presents and discusses an explanation for the needs of sharecroppers on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain. The findings presented in chapters 6 and 7 are taken and assembled as components that together make up the causal explanation. The chapter discusses the findings in relation the rural poverty studies literature, and draws out the importance of social context and social class for the satisfaction or frustration of needs and implications for the transformative justice literature. The chapter outlines some of the difficulties of transformation and the barriers to change, and it discusses and reflects on how the meta-theoretical and methodological components were applied.

 Chapter 9 concludes with a summary of the contributions, limitations, and sets out a 'practice orientation' and some directions for future research.

Chapter 2 Needs, poverty and transition

Introduction

This research sits at an intersection of two fields of study: transformative justice and rural poverty studies. Both share a common focus on human needs, the former viewing need satisfaction as elemental to justice in transition societies and the latter concerned with understanding and explaining rural poverty as the routine non-satisfaction of needs (Jones, 2006). This chapter brings together both fields of study to begin setting out a framework and approach for overcoming a transformative justice weakness in capturing the underlying causes of frustrated needs among particular populations, communities or groups. A critical realist methodological approach is employed in the study that allows us to make sense of the societal arrangements that mediate the satisfaction or frustration of needs among a particular group of people by means of an examination of their everyday injustices, grievances and priorities for change. The details of this methodological approach are provided in chapters 3 and 4. This literature review begins by introducing some of the key transformative literature and some of its limitations for examining the unmet or frustrated needs of sharecroppers. Section 2.3 begins moving towards an 'epistemological agenda' for transformative justice for addressing an 'epistemological gap' identified in the literature. This unfolds through a discussion of concepts for separating more realistic from less realistic theorising and for seeking out particular kinds of empirical data and for helping interpret that data.

2.1   The 'transformative turn'

The turn towards theorising the social and economic dimensions of transitional justice and the emergence of agendas for more 'transformative' modes of practice has figured as part of the wider debates within the transitional justice community about its own values (McAuliffe, 2017). Whether processes of statebuilding are shoehorning liberal ideals into transition societies has given rise to constructivist reflections on the relationship between transitional justice and market values (Richmond, 2010; Franzki and Olarte, 2014), and to conversations about the appropriateness or 'fit' of ostensibly 'Western' institutions and norms such as universal human rights in post-conflict and post-authoritarian societies (Robins, 2013b; Clark, 2010). The discovery that the felt needs of victims tend to be set within the injustices of the everyday (Pham et al., 2007; 2009; Vinck et al., 2011; Vinck and Pham, 2014; Robins, 2013b; 2011a; 2011b; 2011c; 2012), and that collective experiences of "structural and systemic violence", inequality and enduring poverty are often considered of greater import to people and communities than 'extraordinary' political violence (Gready and Robins, 2014b, p.1; also Nagy, 2008; Miller, 2008; Gready, 2010; Gready et al., 2010; Millar, 2011) has stimulated debate within the field about whether transitional justice is doing enough to address the

legacies of past harms. As it relates to this case study, Chapter 5 discusses the national and historical context of the Tunisia's transition in terms of the 2011 uprising and Revolution, with examination of its rural roots, mobilisations by farmers and rural groups and the kinds of unmet or frustrated needs that were articulated in the unrest.

Within the transitional justice community, responses in the form of 'transformative justice' and more 'transformative' modes of transitional justice have sought to reframe practice and solutions around such matters (Gready and Robins, 2014a; McAuliffe, 2017). Advocates of more 'transformative' modes of transitional justice have argued in favour of taking stock of the social and economic dimensions of transition and expanding the ambitions of existing mechanisms to address wider sets of societal harms and the underlying drivers of conflict (Laplante, 2008; Gready, 2010; Bergsmo et al., 2010; Muvingi, 2009; Elster, 2010; Thoms and Ron, 2007; Hanstad et al., 2009; Szablewska and Baumann, 2014; Lambourne, 2009). Several important currents have driven this 'transformative turn' (McAuliffe, 2017), and include those advocating greater collaboration between transitional justice and development practice (Duthie, 2008; 2014; de Grieff and Duthie, 2009; Selim and Murithi, 2011); a prioritisation of economic, social and cultural rights violations (Muvingi, 2009; Cahill-Ripley, 2014; 2016); approaches that address subsistence harms (Sankey, 2013); 'victim-centred' transitional justice (Robins, 2011a; 2012; García-Godos, 2013); and a shift towards distributive justice as opposed to purely restorative and retributive approaches (Mani, 2002; 2008; Alexander, 2003; Aguirre and Pietropaoli, 2008; Uprimny, 2009). Taking a somewhat different approach, Gready and Robins (2014) have suggested an alternative, 'transformative justice' practice agenda operating alongside transitional justice, which is conceived of as a form of transformative politics for delivering justice in transition (Gready and Robins, 2017). This practice agenda shifts emphasis away from legalistic and state-centred mechanisms and solutions towards social actors, communities and civil society as agents of change (also Gready and Robins, 2017; Gready et al., 2010; Boesten and Wilding, 2015). Despite their different normative goals, these currents and their literatures can be broadly defined as constituting the field's 'transformative turn' on account of their sharing a general commitment to tackling social and economic injustices: McAuliffe (2017, p.xiv) notes a number of scholars are explicitly using terms like 'transformation' while others are using synonyms such as structural change, but what they are proposing in any event is "something distinctly greater than stasis or reform, but something falling short of revolution."

2.2   The limitations of the transformative scholarship

2.2.1   Where are root causes examined?

The transformative turn is a significant development but the extent to which its literature can assist with empirically examining and explaining the unmet or frustrated needs of communities, populations and groups in transition societies is limited. A number of issues stand out. First, empirical examinations of the underlying causes of societal harms are largely absent from the scholarship, leaving it with little to offer for unpacking and generating new knowledge about the causes of unmet or frustrated needs among populations, communities and groups. Harms are acknowledged as complex and as potential drivers of social conflict and violence (e.g. Salehyan et al., 2012; Hendrix et al., 2012), but there is little in the literature that has sought to unpack them, their social origins and their relationship to the state and state processes through empirical studies that might contribute to theory building. This represents an epistemological gap. It is significant because without a way of developing knowledge about underlying causes it is difficult to see how a transformative practice or politics is afforded an opportunity to address societal harms. Causal explanations are, arguably, what social science can perhaps most usefully contribute to emancipatory or transformative practice, where "emancipation necessarily requires removing the *basic causes* which systematically produce specific forms of lack and absence suffered by specific groups" (Jones, 2006, p.61, italics my own; also Danermark et al., 1997; Bhaskar, 2009; Collier, 1994).

Why the transformative turn has had so little to say about root causes likely comes down to the normative orientation of its literature and its form of critique. Up to now, the literature has generally eschewed critical examination of the societies and contexts where transformation is envisaged to unfold, and is instead organised around a critical commentary of the field's "foundational limitations" and the limited scope of justice mechanisms (Gready and Robins, 2014a, p.340). This has underpinned a mode of theorising directed towards the international transitional justice community and its values under the goal of reshaping international practice through a revised and more expansive definition of justice (McAuliffe, 2017; Friedman, 2017). Put another way, the transformative turn has been less about researching and programming for social transformation than about showing the field what it lacks, what it overlooks and making the case that it should respond. As one critic has recently put it, "Transformative justice is defined not by what it is but by what it is not, less an imaginary of structural reform or redistribution than a critical response to the field's inattention to wider systemic issues" (McAuliffe, 2017, p.167). The few empirical studies that have probed needs, such as those of Simon Robins (2010; 2011a; 2012), are oriented towards this kind of theorising and are equivocal on root causes: they sample from populations known to be affected directly or indirectly by political violence and then marshal empirical data about felt needs that illustrates

a mismatch between what people say they require and what existing mechanisms of transitional justice prioritise. While such studies have played an important role in raising the profile of wider sets of societal harms, their focus on needs is intended to sustain a discussion of the field's conceptual limitations rather than one about societal harms and their root causes, and of where and how transformation might be effected in practice.[3]

2.2.2 What is transformation?

A second issue is that what is meant by 'transformation' in the transformative literature is vague, as noted already by a number of scholars (Sandoval, 2017; McAuliffe, 2017; Waldorf, 2012), and undertheorised. Indeed, the strength of the term appears to lie not in its analytical value but in its rhetorical power. Several definitions have been put forward, all of which cohere around a similar set of postulates: that transformation concerns wider sets of harms in transition societies and that it amounts to deeper and more thorough change than what is already on offer. In Wendy Lambourne's (2009, p.30) early definition, the field was advised to move from thinking about transition "to think instead in terms of 'transformation,' which implies long-term, sustainable processes embedded in society and adoption of psychosocial,

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[3] What the transformative turn does offer however is a powerful vocabulary for examining causes, even if these have not been applied in empirical examination. Mullen (2015, p.464) for instance follows a number of others (for example, Miller, 2008; Nagy, 2008; Gready et al., 2010; Gready and Robins, 2014b; Evans, 2016; Boesten, 2014) in suggesting transitional justice refocus to address "structural violence" as "the definitive element in transitioning societies". Here, structural violence consists of "institutional or systematic dehumanisation – in the form of the denial of dignity, opportunity, or access to necessary livelihood" and manifests itself either overtly in the form of "repressive legislation or poverty, or covertly in feelings of vulnerability or alienation" (Mullen, 2015, p.464). Gready and Robins (2014b, p.2) talk about addressing "structural and systemic violence" as "collective experiences" while others refer to a need to address mass poverty (Carranza, 2008) and "subsistence harms" (Sankey, 2013). Implicated as well are underlying "power relationships" (Gready and Robins, 2014a, p.2) and "power relations" (Miller, 2008, p.281); "structural factors" (Miller, 2008, p.275) and "unjust economic and power structures" (Sandoval, 2017, p.171); "structural" (Evans, 2016, p.11), "socioeconomic" (Muvingi, 2009, p.164) and "distributional" (Duthie, 2008, p.301) inequalities and "discrimination" (Sandoval, 2017, p.171); as well as "marginalizing structures" (Muvingi, 2009, p.178) and "dominant ideologies" (Sandoval, 2017, p.180) that effect harms upon populations and groups in transition societies. Put to work to as part of the turn's critical response, this vocabulary has tended to appear alongside a variety of modal verbs conveying what practice 'should', 'must' and 'ought' reorient towards addressing and overcoming. Few clues are provided however as to how these phenomena can be empirically examined. One important exception is found within the literature on gender in transitional justice (Boesten 2010; 2012; 2014; Boesten and Wilding, 2015; Fiske and Shackel, 2015; Porter, 2016; O'Rourke, 2015) which has emphasised context-specific constructions of gender as shaping the kinds of violence women are exposed to across war and 'peace' trajectories. Boesten and Wilding (2015, p.76) draw on feminist social theory and discussions of 'transformation' to suggest how harms are perpetuated by institutionalised inequalities and social structures, "whether they be institutions, norms and values, economic relations or family structures that shape people's experiences, choices and opportunities" (also Lambourne and Carreon, 2016). Boesten (2014) illustrates through work in Peru how persistent poverty and marginalisation interact with sexual violence in a way that makes each reinforce or perpetuate the other. Fiske and Shackel (2015) find similar patterns in their study of gender, poverty and violence in three post-conflict societies. While gender hierarchies are not examined in this study, what is significant about these studies in contrast to others is that they succeed in establishing causal relationships between various types of harm on the one hand, and societal norms, values and material relations on the other.

political and economic, as well as legal, perspectives on justice". Lambourne proposed a 'transformative justice model of transitional justice' that emphasises the "transformation" of relationships, institutions and structures. In Matthew Evans' (2016, p.7) more recent definition, transformative justice addresses structural violence and inequalities through the "transformation" of "socioeconomic structures", while Paul Gready and Simon Robins (2014a, p.2) propose that "transformative justice is defined as transformative change" which challenges "unequal and intersecting power relationships and structures of exclusion at both the local and the global level" by means of "local agency and resources [and] the prioritization of process rather than preconceived outcomes." Most recently, Sandoval (2017, p.180) has discussed transformation as the overturning of pre- and post-conflict belief systems, suggesting that transitional justice might contribute to "the transformation of dominant ideologies and structures that permitted or consented to atrocities."

While useful perhaps for advocating an engagement with wider sets of harms, the term is conceptually limited for empirical research concerned with root causes and with where transformation might be effected in practice. This is because it furnishes no (meta)theory and vocabulary of change that can clarify the dynamics of change processes and the role of human agency. That is to say, it tells us nothing about what social change is and how it happens, as well as why change *might not* happen and why states of affair may persist. This is a symptom of a broader problem within the transformative turn that it lacks a definite approach to social ontology: the range of definitions for transformation and transformative justice all appear to have been formulated in isolation from the quite substantial social theoretical work on transformation and emancipation, which theorises the dynamics of continuity and change and its emancipatory quality, as well as ontological questions more broadly. For transformative research, the need for a social theoretically-informed position on transformation arises from the risk that our descriptions will become chaotic without one. For example, should we think of harms being effected by social structures or through social practices, or something else? Are people more or less free to shape their social circumstances, or those "unequal and intersecting power relationships" at various scales (Gready and Robins, 2014a, p.2)? Or is free-will all but circumscribed by structure? Is transformation mainly ideational, as Sandoval (2017) appears to suggest, or does it involve material change as well? How does transformation differ from continuity or structural 'reproduction'? What makes a transformation emancipatory or just? One significant outcome is that the call for transformative change has unfurled without serious consideration of the structural barriers to change. As Sandoval (2017, p.180) has suggested, "the potential for social change is often taken for granted, while the capacity of the social system to remain unchanged is usually overlooked." While the transitional justice literature has begun examining the domestic

political constraints to transitional justice processes in transition societies (Waldorf, 2012; 2017; McAuliffe, 2017; Duthie, 2017; Duthie and Seils, 2017), there has been little discussion in the transformative literature of how agents' capacities for action are shaped or constrained by their social-political contexts. Instead, institutions, groups, organisations and movements are construed, rather optimistically, as able to effect change in a relatively straightforward fashion while appearing themselves to operate in a structural vacuum.

2.3   An epistemological agenda for transformative justice

2.3.1   Understanding and explaining needs

While recognising the importance of the transformative turn and the urgency of addressing the social and economic issues it has brought to the foreground, reckoning with this epistemological gap entails an 'epistemological agenda' for transformative justice for developing an understanding of the causes of need frustration in concrete cases in transition societies and which lays out how this can be done through social scientific enquiry. Two problem-based research questions are suggested at a general level through which to examine the underlying mechanisms of social-economic harm: what needs do particular groups or communities have and why do they have them? The first question is a descriptive one while the second is causal. In moving towards a framework for tackling these questions, a discussion of concepts is needed for separating more realistic from less realistic theorising and for seeking out particular kinds of empirical data and for helping interpret that data. The topic of human needs is discussed first in terms of relativist or objectivist-subjectivist positions, before the adoption of a realist position on needs as objective but also socially and culturally mediated and historically specific. In applying these questions to the case of sharecroppers in Tunisia as a systematically oppressed group in a transition society, some important insights are offered by the literature from rural poverty studies - a field where the concept of needs has been most readily applied. Especial use is made of the critical literature from rural development studies, drawing on Bernstein's (1992; 2010b) distinction between 'residual' and 'relational' perspectives on poverty for setting out why relational concepts such as 'class' and 'exploitation' are more appropriate for generating explanations for unmet needs as our phenomenon of interest. In doing so, I draw on historical studies of sharecropping and agrarian contract making which point toward the sorts of poverty-generating mechanisms we might expect to be at play in the research area and in the rural context where it is studied.

A conceptualisation of 'need'

As one of the more contested topics in philosophy, 'human needs' have been conceptualised and employed in diverse ways in social science research. Much of the debate about needs, Jones (2006) notes, has oscillated between objective, universal accounts on the one hand, and perspectives that view needs as culturally relative on the other, with research projects on the

topic organised around one or the other of these two poles (also Soper, 2006). Despite a concern for needs in transitional justice, surprisingly little has been said in the transitions scholarship about what constitutes needs and who defines them, as Robins (2011c) has already observed. A notable exception is Robins himself, whose 'victim-centred' approach to transitional justice seems to entail a relativist position. The picture is a little different in peace and conflict studies, a field perhaps most proximate to transitional justice. In its early years of the late 1980s and 1990s, some attempts were made to define and work with a notion of 'human need' (Burton, 1990; Sandole, 1990; Sites, 1990; Clark, 1990; Christie, 1997; Staub, 2003) as a means of resolving conflict from the grassroots up – though the focus on 'human need' began to fade as the field moved toward prioritising peace through liberal statebuilding from the late 1990s onwards (Richmond, 2009; 2010). [4] In contrast to Robins, these perspectives on need gravitated toward objective accounts that situate needs as "*specifically* and *universally* human" (Clark, 1990, p.38, original italics).

In contrast to both of these, the conceptualisation of need employed in this study has come out of attempts to reconcile objectivist-subjectivist and relativist positions (Doyal and Gough, 1991; Ramsay, 1992; 2004; Collier, 1987; Bhaskar, 2009; Jones, 2006; Sayer, 2004; 2011; and Assiter and Noonan, 2007. The concept is drawn directly from this work and applied in the study. While a review of the needs literature is beyond the scope of the chapter, a summary of some of the main objections to the notion of universal human needs is presented here as a lead into an overview of the critical realist conceptualisation employed here. The summary of the arguments is brief, but more comprehensive surveys can be found in Doyal and Gough (1991, ch.1 & 2), Ramsay (1992, ch.3), Soper (2006) and Dean (2010, ch.2 & 3). A discussion then follows of the overlap of this conceptualisation of need with Nussbaum's capability approach, and the proximity of Nussbaum's list of fundamental capabilities to lists of human need generated by Doyal and Gough (1991) and Ramsay (1992).

In simple terms then, rejecters of the notion of objective human needs can be separated into two broad groups according to whether their arguments entail relativist or subjectivist positions (Dean, 2007; Doyal and Gough, 1991). Those taking relativist positions situate needs as historically, culturally and socially constructed, and as relative to particular societies, communities or groups. According to this view, appeals to the objectivity of needs is viewed as problematic on the grounds of essentialism. Universal needs are inherently normative and evaluative, obscuring and overriding discourse, difference and the agency of populations and

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[4] Richmond (2009) has criticised the shift to statebuilding for trading off human needs concerns for security and liberal institutions. Overviews of the shifting intellectual and political and policy environment in which the field developed can be found in Heathershaw (2008) and Sabaratnam (2011).

communities. In the transitions scholarship, Robins (2013b, p.42) has faulted them for constructing individuals as "fundamentally non-social" and in a way that has excluded concerns about equity and social justice after conflict. A subjectivist position in contrast is entailed by those who consider 'human needs' an appeal to a metaphysical construct which cannot be empirically shown. For these critics, the notion of 'human need' is suspect and what should be put before consideration is only that which can be empirically accessed or measured, namely needs expressed as subjective 'preferences' or 'wants' by individuals – that is, what people say they need or what they consume and use. The subjectivist position is characteristic of liberal thought, and is an important tenet of orthodox economics and liberal state building. Common to both groups are arguments that claims to the objectivity of human needs are elitist, and possibly the hallmarks of authoritarianism or cultural imperialism. They can imply that other individuals, groups, government officials or development planners for example might know better what other people need and require (Heller, 1974; Wiggins, 1998; Lukes, 2005). Charges of cultural imperialism and ethnocentrism have, understandably, come from some movements associated with oppressed groups, such as some branches of feminism and anti-racism (Soper, 2006; Doyal and Gough, 1991), while criticism from liberal thinkers has been largely been informed by the experiences of the former socialist economies which claimed to organise national development around satisfying the needs of their citizens (Jones, 2006).

A third position on needs is informed by contributions from Ramsay (1992; 2004), Collier (1987), Bhaskar (2009), Jones (2006), Sayer (2004; 2011) and Assiter and Noonan (2007), and is grounded in a critical realist philosophical framework.[5] This position takes something of a middle ground between objectivism and relativism in viewing needs as an objective, trans-historical phenomenon whose concrete manifestations and means of satisfaction are socially and culturally shaped and historically situated. This realist view sees human needs as determined partly by the biological constitution of our being, that is the structural nature of the human body which requires, for example, food, shelter and so on; and partly by a psychosocial side that consists of 'potentials' or capabilities such as the capacity for language or to participate in a community, and liabilities such as loneliness and social isolation.[6]

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[5] An overview of critical realism as a meta-theory for the social sciences is provided in chapter 3.
[6] Much like with human rights, a long-standing discussion has ensued in the needs literature about whether a hierarchy exists between different needs. Advocates of the hierarchy view (of whom Maslow, 1954 is a prominent example) have tended to give primacy to physical needs, arguing these must be satisfied first before other psychological needs can emerge. Reflecting on the debate among realists, Bhaskar suggests in contrast that "Freedom in the sense of self-determination is I think just as basic as those physical needs. It corresponds to a different part of our constitution as human beings, not the biological part but the psychosocial part, and we cannot be said to be free unless we are capable of formulating our own projects individually and collectively. So freedom from oppression is a necessary condition also. What one needs is of course a whole set of social conditions […] that are necessary in order to fulfil the action, in order to have meaningful action. Thus a meaningful act

Accordingly, a need "is anything (contingently or absolutely) necessary to the survival or well-being of an agent, whether the agent currently possesses it or not" (Bhaskar, 2009, p.114). Against the charge that human needs cannot be empirically shown, the realist perspective suggests we can postulate the existence of these needs because 1) we have scientific knowledge about what the requirements are for survival and health, including mental health; 2) we have behavioural evidence for people's striving for need 'satisfiers'; and 3) we have causal evidence about what negative effects might ensue if needs are not satisfied (Ramsay, 1992; 2004). For instance, the existence of particular mental health needs can be inferred from scientific knowledge about how low self-esteem or prolonged periods of social isolation can impair psychological functioning.

For this realist position, needs manifest themselves as 'felt needs', 'preferences' or 'wants' which are mind- and belief-dependent. These manifestations are socially and culturally mediated and historically situated, as is evident from their multiple and diverse manifestations across time and place. This variation owes itself to the availability of objects[7] required to satisfy manifestations of need at particular moments, and to variations in knowledge and beliefs about those objects. Ramsey observes for example that "the biological need for food may be manifested as the felt need for a bowl of rice or for three well balanced meals a day depending on what food is produced in a society and the distribution of wealth in that society" (Ramsay, 1992, p.55). So, while needs do not themselves change over time, what does change is "the specific socio-historic form these needs take, ways of satisfying them and the choice of objects to meet them" (Ramsay, 2004, p227). This understanding foregrounds the role of social, economic and political structures and of social relations in shaping 'felt needs' and in mediating the way needs are satisfied or denied for particular populations and groups at particular moments (Ramsay, 1992; Jones, 2006).[8]

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presupposes a certain level of recognition, respect, dignity or esteem" (Bhaskar and Hartwig, 2010, p.110).

[7] These objects "can be people, social relations, states of affairs, physical objects, consumer goods, public services, living and working conditions, material and non-material resources as well as social, environmental and cultural factors" (Ramsay, 2004, p.227).

[8] Realist critics of positions entailing subjectivism suggest one of its main implications has been to organise society on the basis of 'demand' and in a way that has obscured the necessary conditions for human flourishing, as is visible in the persistent inequalities in resource distribution and its reproduction through markets. According to Ramsay (1992, p.66), "if the satisfaction of need is measured by the aggregate effective demand [as an expression of 'felt need', 'preferences' or 'wants'], those individuals with more wealth, income and resources (energy, skill, information etc.) will have more and therefore an unequal say in determining the efficient allocation for the satisfactions of need. If there is more effective demand for certain goods and services, then efficiency, on this model, dictates that these demands be met rather than rival felt needs or demands which lack the money or resources to make them register as effective demand. As a result of the initial inequalities, effective demand is also unequal. Market economists can only show at most that the market is the mechanism by which need is met in equal proportion to the money and resources an

In addition, the mind- and belief-dependency of 'felt needs' problematises the place of perception in human needs on the grounds these exist independently of whatever we think about them. Expressions of 'felt need' may correspond to a 'real' need, but the fact that beliefs may be false or knowledge incomplete means they might not correspond at all (Ramsay, 1992; 2004; Jones, 2006). The 'felt need' a person might have for their abusive partner for instance might emerge as a manifestation of a real, underlying need for relatedness or security that could be satisfied in other ways. In addition, some needs might not be immediately experienced ('unfelt needs') and therefore go undemanded. As Ramsay again (1992, p.128) observes, "if someone does not realise that certain symptoms require attention or is suffering from an asymptomatic disorder they will not feel the need to seek treatment." Needs-holders might lack information and resources, preventing their awareness of a genuine need, or perceptions of genuine needs may be affected or distorted by the way material and non-material resources are distributed. People may reinterpret what they need as a way of coping with various forms of depravation, as Amartya Sen (1999) and Martha Nussbaum (2003) have demonstrated in respect to the 'adaptive preferences' of the poor.

The value of this conceptualisation of need is that it draws on the objectivist-subjectivist and relativist accounts but avoids both the reductionist essentialism of objectivism and the 'flat ontology' of subjectivism. It also retains the possibility of judging needs claims to be more or less conducive to human flourishing – a possibility rejected by positions entailing relativism (Dean, 2007; Sayer, 2011). Working with this conceptualisation of need allows keeping at bay top-down or elitist attempts to define what people need in transition societies, while also resisting a reduction of needs purely to whatever is 'felt' and demanded by different communities or groups – though these remain of critical importance in empirical study.[9] Furthermore, while relativist perspectives might appear egalitarian for holding any and all needs claims to be equally valid and for avoiding judgements about others as "falsely conscious" (Sayer, 2000, p.48; also 2011), their detachment from any notion of objective need may lead to inadvertently shielding of oppressive practices and states of affairs from criticism, such as in circumstances where people are systematically silenced (Assiter and Noonan, 2007;

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individual possesses or has access to. They cannot show that the market maximises equitability according to need."

[9] Beyond contributing to empirical study, Schweiger and Graf (2014, p.159) argue that there is a further reason for including the 'voices of the poor' in poverty research: "if it were unlikely that the poor people's views and experiences would lead to the detection of situations and circumstances where issues of poverty and injustices exist, we want to argue that they have a right to be heard. Their moral standing as persons demands that they can articulate their interests, feelings, and points of views on an equal basis with all other members of society, and this fact alone is enough that there is a strong reason to give the subjective experience of poverty and its articulation by the poor an important place in theorizing about it [...] a right to be heard and taken seriously is a minimum standard every account of poverty that is in line with basic democratic values has to entail."

Hay, 2002). This CR conceptualisation of need helps to get around these limitations by emphasising how these different approaches to need are in fact engaging with different aspects of 'stratified reality' (about which more is written in Chapter 3, section 3.2.1), in this case what it refers to as the 'empirical' and 'actual'. Employing a realist conceptualisation here gets over the limitations of existing approaches by emphasising the need to move through the 'empirical' to the 'actual' and to the 'real', which allows drawing out how particular societal arrangements or social context at the level of the 'real' mediate the ways needs are satisfied or frustrated: how people are socially positioned, how resources are distributed, and what knowledge and beliefs exist about the objects required for need satisfaction.

Core concepts

The concept of need employed in this study is drawn directly from this realist work. As a core concept in the research questions, it does not lend itself to a 'basic needs approach' to poverty measurement however which approaches poverty as a *state* as opposed to a process and which works with bundles of objective basic minimum requirements (see section 2.3.2 below), which is to say, with what people *have*. Nor does it lend itself to an approach where unmet need is identified by merely reporting what people say they require. The conceptualisation is consonant rather with the more prominent capabilities approach, specifically Martha Nussbaum's (2000, p.78) elaboration of it, which identifies a number of "central human functional capabilities" that cohere with the models of human need already mentioned (e.g. Doyal and Gough, 1991; Ramsay, 1992; 2004) and developed outside of the capabilities framework (for a discussion, see Gough, 2014; also Sayer, 2010). According to the capabilities approach (also Sen, 1999), 'functionings' refer to what people can do or be and 'capabilities' refer to the combinations of functionings that are feasible for people to achieve and which they have chosen. While these employ different terminologies (i.e. 'needs' versus 'capabilities'), they share a common commitment to a universal conception of need/capabilities; underscore the significance of autonomy, choice or decision-making and unlike basic needs approaches emphasise the potentiality or capacity to *do* or *be*.[10] These are discussed more fully by Gough (2014).

For illustrating this consonance, Table 1 lists Nussbaum's (2000) 'central functional human capabilities' alongside lists of human need drawn up by Doyal and Gough (1991) and (Ramsay, 1992). The elements broadly cohere across the rows, although there may be some differences in emphasis and some capabilities/needs will overlap with others. Like the needs thinkers who

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[10] The capabilities approach emerged in the 1980s-1990s from criticisms of basic needs approaches, and marked a shift in development policy and practice from thinking in terms of 'needs' towards 'capabilities' and rights. Though 'needs' began falling out of favour by way of its association with basic needs approaches, academic work on needs (such as that cited above) had already begun reconceptualising human need in terms that were consistent with the capabilities approach.

distinguish between abstract general needs and their manifestation, Nussbaum (2000, p.77-78) identifies these capabilities as trans-historical with "room for a reasonable pluralism in specification […] Literacy is a concrete specification for the modern world of a more general capability that may have been realised without literacy in other times and places." Similarly, we might re-examine Ramsay's earlier example about the felt need for a bowl of rice through the capabilities framework, coming to view it instead as a functioning that underwrites life and bodily health as central capabilities.

Nussbaum's 'central functional human capabilities'	Doyal and Gough's needs	Maureen Ramsay's fundamental human needs
Control over one's environment (political life)	Critical participation	Self-realisation Physical and mental health 1 (as conditions for action)
Affiliation A (social interaction, compassion and justice)	Social participation	
Bodily integrity	Avoidance of serious harm	Security Sexual needs
Life	Survival	Physical survival
Bodily health	Physical health	Physical and mental health 2 (as natural functioning)
Senses, imagination, thought **Emotions** **Affiliation B (the social bases of self-respect and freedom from discrimination)**	Cognitive and emotional capacity Cultural understanding: teachers	Esteem and identity
Practical reason	Critical autonomy	Self-realisation
Affiliation A (social interaction, compassion and justice) and B	Opportunities to participate	Love and relatedness
Other species	?	Love and relatedness
Play	?	
To have control over one's environment B (material)	?	Security

Table 1. Nussbaum's 'central human functional capabilities' compared to lists of needs by Doyal and Gough and by Ramsay. Sources: Nussbaum (2000); Gough (2014); Ramsay (1992).

For the needs thinkers, abstract general needs listed in the central column and the column on the right exist independently of their status i.e. whether they are 'met' or 'satisfied', or 'unmet' or 'frustrated' in concrete cases. The terms 'unmet' and 'frustrated' are derived from the philosophical literature about needs and refer to the consequences or situation of absent or missing need 'satisfiers'. As indicated above, these objects or satisfiers can be material or non-

material and include people, social relations, cultural factors, public services and so on (Ramsay, 1992). Through this lens, poverty is redefined as a process of the routine non-satisfaction of some or all of these needs for individuals and groups, and extending the definition beyond a narrow income or material focus to capture these non-material dimensions as well (Doyal and Gough, 1991; Kabeer, 1991; Gough and McGregor, 2007; Jones, 2006). These terms have their correlates in the capabilities approach too, where poverty is defined as the 'deprivation' of capabilities or the inability to achieve particular sets of functionings. 'Harms' meanwhile refers to the acts or societal arrangements and conditions "that interfere with the fulfilment of fundamental needs and obstruct the spontaneous unfolding of human potential" (Tifft and Sullivan, 2001, p.191).

These core concepts inform the research questions and methodology developed in this study, and since they are abstract they can, in principle, be applied anywhere and to different groups and communities. This particular study applies them to the case of sharecroppers in Tunisia as a systematically oppressed group in a transition society. How they relate to the rural poverty literature, and in particular the agrarian change and peasant studies literature is discussed next.

2.3.2   Rural poverty – towards a relational approach

Residual perspectives

Perspectives and approaches to rural poverty can be categorised according to whether poverty is understood in 'residual' or 'relational' terms (Bernstein, 1992; 2010a; 2010b Borras, 2009, Pattenden, 2016; Mosse, 2010). We might draw on either of these perspectives for explaining the needs of communities in transition, but differences in their ontological and epistemological assumptions, ethical assertions and types of causal claim (Olsen, 2006) means the explanations generated are likely to differ substantially.

Residual perspectives are characteristic of mainstream development theory and practice, and are grounded in liberal assumptions about how the market functions as a satisfier of needs expressed as individual 'preferences' or 'wants'. For residual perspectives, poverty occurs when individuals are unable to consume enough to fulfil these wants or preferences as a consequence of being 'excluded' or 'marginalised' from market development and globalisation, where it is assumed these drive economic growth and gradually raise incomes (Bernstein, 1992; 2010b; Kaplinsky, 2005). The way to address poverty or to satisfy people's basic needs from a residual perspective is to integrate rural people into processes of development, which in practice means incorporating them more deeply into markets and expanding their production of agricultural commodities for sale. A recent report by IFPRI (2013) entitled 'From subsistence to profit: Transforming smallholder farms' for instance suggests that:

For smallholder farmers with profit potential, their ability to be successful is hampered by such challenges as climate change, price shocks, limited financing options, and inadequate access to healthy and nutritious food. By overcoming these challenges, smallholders can move from subsistence to commercially oriented agricultural systems, increase their profits, and operate at an efficient scale—thereby helping to do their part in feeding the world's hungry (IFPRI, 2013, p.vi).

The dominant mode of defining and measuring poverty is through the consumption or income-focussed basic needs approach, which identifies sets of 'basic needs' such as for food and clothing, and establishes a poverty line that distinguishes between those who are considered to have the potential purchasing power for command over their basic needs and those who do not (Laderchi, 2003). 'Multi-dimensional' approaches to poverty measurement are more recent and take account of other factors like assets, security and self-respect in poverty, and are typified through the World Bank's celebrated publications on 'Voices of the Poor'.[11] Mainstream development has been characterised by these approaches to poverty and development since at least the 1970s, when the weaknesses of import-substitution strategies on the scale of national economies gave way to a new agenda for targeting development planning directly on low income groups (Geiser, 2014; Kaplinsky, 2005). In recent years, these approaches have also included efforts at domestic institutional reform for addressing the apparent failures of markets and governments that undermine people's participation in economy and of benefiting from globalisation – what Hickey (2010, p.1140) has referred to as "inclusive neoliberalism". Alongside structural economic reform, the World Bank for instance now includes calls for the promotion of democracy and the rule of law, the strengthening of accountability and the reduction of corruption (Mani, 2008).[12]

Residual approaches are least preferred here for the reason that they offer little insight into the nature of poverty and its explanation. The way needs are conceptualised and measured within basic needs approaches are limited, as a number of scholars have argued (e.g. Alkire, 2005; Bernstein, 1992),[13] and in light of the more thoroughgoing realist conceptualisations outlined

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[11] See Thorbecke (2007) and Harriss (2007) for overviews. The development of multi-dimensional approaches to poverty largely followed Sen's contributions and those of Robert Chambers' (1983, p.3-4), the latter of whom took poverty line measures to task for not being "*concerned with wealth or material possessions, nor with aspects of deprivation relating to access to water, shelter, health services, education or transport, nor with debt, dependence, isolation, migration, vulnerability, powerlessness, physical weakness or disability, high mortality or short life expectancy; nor with social disadvantage, status or self-respect.*"

[12] Its new language, Bush (2007, p.2) suggests, "is mostly concerned with the efficiency of markets, economic liberalization and the importance of social and human capital, where education and the knowledge economy are intended to provide the umbrella under which the forces of globalization operate."

[13] Alkire (2005, p.116) indicates the basic needs approach was initially promising but was distorted in the pursuit of measurement: "Paul Streeten (1984) published a short article that identified

above. Multi-dimensional approaches which have sought to surpass poverty-line measures share with the latter a focus on individuals and the 'household' as the main unit of analysis and point of agency (Olsen, 2006; 2009). They apply regression techniques to survey data for identifying associations between variables, such as income and tenure type (Hulme, 2014; Green and Hulme, 2005), eschewing in turn the relations and structures that give rise to the poverty's empirical features, as Harriss (2007) has argued. The pursuit of explanations for poverty has led to vast aggregations of descriptive results which tends to lead to similar sets of conclusions: that the 'characteristics of the poor' explain poverty, such as household control over assets (also Green, 2006; Bush, 2007), and household decisions. Some examples of key "determinants of poverty" shown in Table 2 have been taken from the World Bank's 'Handbook on Poverty and Inequality' (Table 2).

Critics of these approaches such as Harriss (2007, p.5) notes how poverty is approached in a rather limited way, where it is not

> *seen as the consequence of social relations or of the categories through which people classify and act upon the social world. Notably the way in which poverty is conceptualised separates it from the social processes of the accumulation and distribution of wealth*

Jones (2006, p.23) suggest the underlying causes of poverty are lost when poverty is reduced to its "common empirical aspects or characteristics" and when 'explanation' "consists of identifying these characteristics by means of the examination of empirical data." Mosse (2010, p.1156) similarly notes that its focus on the conditions and experiences of poverty ignores the "the social mechanisms through which poverty persists, especially those that fall beyond narrow income consumption concerns, or individual entitlements mediated by legal and market systems".

Methodological individualism removes people from the social systems of which they are a part, which includes the structures and relations that facilitate as well as constrain their agency (Tilly, 2007; Olsen, 2006; 2009). Though recent attention to social relationships (networks, trust, social capital and so on) in the last decade or so would seem to invite more complete

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'unanswered questions' of the basic needs approach: who defines needs; whether the goal was 'human flourishing' or 'meeting basic needs'; where participation fit in; which needs institutions could legitimately plan to meet; and how to coordinate international funding to meet basic needs. But in the meantime, before those questions had been adequately addressed, while the research and discussion was underway, operational programs run by the World Bank and International Labour Organization (ILO) among others hastily implemented 'answers'. They focused on commodity inputs to health, education, clothing, shelter, sanitation and hygiene — because it was relatively cheap and easy to measure these. The problem was that the overemphasis on commodities misinterpreted the basic needs approach, and in so doing redefined and subverted it."

forms of qualitative enquiry, critics note these have retained a quantitative, "econometric grammar" (Bebbington et al, 2004, p.45) and are essentially construed as "a class of asset endowment" (Mosse, 2010, p.1158) belonging to particular households and individuals (also Harris, 2001). The focus on rational actors, Olsen (2006) notes, appears to blame individuals for remaining poor, while descriptions of poverty escapes such as in the aforementioned 'Voices of the Poor' resemble what Tilly (2007, p.45) has called a "free enterprise morality tale: take risks, work hard, accumulate capital, invest wisely, and you will escape from poverty."

Determinants	
Regional characteristics	Geographical isolation, low resource base, low rainfall, inhospitable climate, poor services, communication and infrastructure, market stability, judiciary
Community characteristics	Electricity, proximity to large markets, school and medical clinic availability, land distribution, social capital
Household characteristics	Gender of household head, participation in the labour force, household size, dependency ratios, tangible goods (land, livestock etc.), financial assets (liquid assets, savings), shelter
Individual characteristics	Age, education, employment status, nutritional status, disease status, ethnicity

Table 2. Some of the World Bank's determinants of poverty (Haughton and Khandker, 2009).

Relational perspectives

Relational perspectives situate the causes of poverty as lying in the very terms by which people are inserted into particular economies and patterns of social relations (Borras, 2009). A relational lens considers material depravation as a consequence of the way people are exposed to markets and to exploitative relations and structures, rather than their being marginal to them (Bernstein, 2010b; Borras, 2009; Bush, 2007). According to Bernstein (1992, p.24), "relational approaches investigate the causes of rural poverty in terms of social relations of production and reproduction, and of property and power, that characterize certain kinds of development, and especially those associated with the spread and growth capitalism." These perspectives are in accord with the realist conceptualisation of need outlined above, which apply it to people with rural-based livelihoods. It is in accord because relational perspectives conceptualise poverty as frustrated need, where needs extend beyond narrow income concerns to include issues of security, self-respect, dignity and so on, and because satisfaction/frustration is considered to be underpinned by social and economic relations and structures (Bernstein, 1992; 2010b).

Of the sorts of rural social relations emphasised, the study of class relations in rural societies and communities are central, but it can also involve examining intersecting relations of gender (Razavi, 2003; 2009; O'Laughlin, 1998; 2009), race and ethnicity, and religion and caste (Sharma, 1985; Bernstein, 2010b; Bernstein and Byres, 2001; Harriss, 2012). With a strong

material emphasis, these relational understandings are grounded in the theory and practice of the political economy of agrarian change (PEACH) which is centred around the Journal of Peasant Studies (JPS), and more recently the Journal of Agrarian Change (JAC).[14]

Alongside these a sub-set of relational perspectives has also engaged with the non-material dimensions of poverty, highlighting the psychosocial and relational/symbolic features that are rooted in, but not reducible to, material objects and patterns of distribution (Lister, 2004; Sen, 1983; Alkire, 2002; Jo, 2013; Green and Hulme, 2005; Hickey, 2010; Mosse, 2010; Bebbington et al., 2010; Williams et al., 2012). According to Scoones (2015, p.53-54), "even if someone is not short of food in material terms, feelings of alienation, experiences of marginalization and fears of destitution and loss of dignity may have a major impact […] The 'affective' can influence livelihoods as much as the structural and material, and always in interaction with them." This branch of literature has focussed on experiences of poverty in terms of insecurity and fear (Wood, 2007), misrecognition, humiliation, shame and 'lack of voice' (Graf and Schweiger, 2014; Schweiger, 2014; Lister, 2004; Jo, 2013; Walker 2013; Walker, 2014) as well as the role of political institutions, representation, citizenship and rights in poverty analysis and reduction. These perspectives are found most prominently within social 'well-being' and 'sustainable livelihoods' approaches in development and poverty studies (Scoones, 2015; Gough et al., 2007; McGregor, 2007; Gasper, 2007; Jo, 2013), the chronic poverty school (Green and Hulme, 2005; Hickey, 2010; Mosse, 2010; Bebbington et al., 2010) and with those working within the capabilities framework more broadly.

In sum, what this scholarship does is offer important sets of relational concepts that allow us to avoid reducing the nature of poverty and its causes purely to its empirical and measurable features. It allows us to operationalise the concept of need, and of poverty, beyond narrow income and consumption measures and to view poverty as a phenomenon that is comprised of particular societal arrangements. Relational perspectives and concepts are preferred here over residual ones for the way they more fully locate people in systems that are not just economic but which are also social, cultural, historical and so on. Employing relational concepts allows the seeking out of particular kinds of empirical data and helps with interpretation of that data.

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[14] PEACH scholarship has a long history, first emerging in 1960s from the efforts of researchers to understand the failure of growth-based theories of agricultural development driven by technical change to alleviate rural poverty (Harriss, 1982; Griffin, 1973; da Corta, 2010). It comprised a multidisciplinary agenda which drew on history, sociology, economics, politics, agronomy, anthropology and geography, and a turn towards critical political economy which looked at how dominant classes could accumulate by appropriating surpluses from weaker classes (da Corta, 2010; Harriss, 1982; Bernstein and Byres, 2001; see also the Editorial Statement of The Journal of Peasant Studies, 1973). For an overview of peasant studies scholarship and the shift from peasant studies to agrarian change, see Bernstein and Byres (2001). For an overview of PEACH scholarship and its iterations with development studies, see da Corta (2010) and Borras (2009).

2.3.3 Relational concepts: social relations and structures, power and agency

Some of the more significant relational concepts employed by the relational literature include social relations, power and structure and agency. These concepts have been elaborated and developed abstractly outside of the peasant studies and agrarian change literature over the course of several decades, and have been subject to intense debate concerning their precise nature, how the concepts relate to one another (such as structure and agency), where the emphasis should lie and how can they be measured. Their application in empirical rural research has yielded a variety of rural social relations and structures, as well as forms of power and modes and practices of agency among rural people. As will be shown too, the shifts and debates in the history of the field have mirrored broader developments in the social sciences and abstract debates and conceptual developments, particularly where conversations around structure and agency led the field to shed its structuralist and deterministic approach in the 1980s. Section 2.3.4 introduces some of the more significant rural social relations and forms of power while section 2.3.5 discusses issues of structure and agency.

2.3.4 Social relations and power

Agrarian 'classes of labour'

Class is central to relational perspectives on poverty, advocates of which often begin

> *with class for a reason – not as merely a description of livelihood chances or as a characteristic – but as a conceptual tool identifying a poor person's social position in processes of production and of capitalist accumulation which can help us understand the mechanisms of poverty creation* (da Corta, 2010, p.35).

Though class analysis has been somewhat out of fashion in the social sciences for a number years, in poverty studies and development it is undergoing something of a return (Hickey, 2010; Campling et al., 2016; Pattenden et al., 2017).[15] Unlike more popular sociological definitions which define it in terms of shared attributes like income and attitudes, and which categorise people into classes according to these attributes, a relational understanding defines class as a social relation between groups of producers and non-producers (Bernstein, 2010a; Sayer, 2010; Campling, 2016; Wright, 1996; 2009). In agrarian formations, class relations refer to who has control and access to productive resources, such as land, the different activities people perform, and what happens with farming output (Ellis, 1993). Its considers the interactions between classes and groups implicated in rural production, such as landlords and landholding farmers of various sizes, moneylenders, tenants and labourers, traders, and

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[15] According to Hickey (2010, p.1152), "class has (re)emerged […] as being of critical importance, particularly to the politics of poverty reduction on the ground." See Penn (2016) for a discussion about the disappearance of class analysis in sociology and Fevre (2003) for how sociology began moving towards neoliberal economics during the 1990s.

industrial actors. 'Classes of labour' meanwhile refers to the recent phenomenon of these interactions becoming more complex in the Global South as the working poor have increasingly occupied mixed class positions (Bernstein, 2009). Labour has become fragmented (Bernstein, 2009; 2010a; 2010b; 2011) as strategies of livelihood diversification have tended to combine wage labour with other methods of income generation within and across different social spaces (also van der Ploeg, 2013). According to Bernstein (2010a, p.111),

> *the working poor of the South have to pursue their reproduction through insecure, oppressive and typically scarce wage employment and/or a range of likewise precarious small-scale and "informal economy" survival activity, including marginal farming. In effect, livelihoods are pursued through complex combinations of wage employment and self-employment. Additionally, many pursue their means of reproduction across different sites of the social division of labour: urban and rural, agricultural and non-agricultural, wage employment and marginal self-employment. The social locations and identities the working poor inhabit, combine and move between make ever more fluid boundaries and defy inherited assumptions of fixed and uniform notions of "worker", "farmer", "petty trader", "urban", "rural" "employed" and "self-employed".*

'Classes of labour' encompasses those occupying different class positions but who nevertheless remain net sellers of labour power (Pattenden, 2016). They include classic wage labourers on the one hand and those possessing some productive resources on the other "who share with wage labourers the overall position of being exploited and oppressed – and who, indeed, may alternate between being wage workers and small-scale petty commodity producers, seasonally or throughout their lifetimes" (Lerche, 2010, p.65). Classes of labour may include for instance small farmers moving between commodity production and wage labour on a seasonal basis, or those where one family member might produce on the land while another is engaged in casual wage labour. While class relations are central to relational perspectives on poverty as the "universal […] 'determinations' of social practices in capitalism" (Bernstein, 2010a, p.115) they are not "exclusive" determinations. Relational perspectives also consider how other social relations such as gender, ethnicity, caste and so can "intersect and combine" (Bernstein, 2010a, p.115) with class in ways that that reinforce privilege and power and which shape the distribution of rewards, opportunities and disadvantages, as already mentioned (Tsikata, 2015; Harriss, 2012; Ravazi, 2003; 2009; O'Laughlin, 1998; 2009; Harriss-White, 2004).

Exploitation

Exploitation refers to the enrichment of one group or class at the expense of another through the appropriation of surplus labour (Byres, 1983a; 2003). These groups or classes are net buyers rather than net sellers of labour, which distinguishes them from classes of labour (Pattenden, 2016). Their ownership of productive resources makes surplus appropriation possible and shapes the distribution of economic power (Byres, 1983a). Where one or more mechanisms exist for the capture of surpluses, relations of exploitation are said to obtain. These mechanisms be roughly organised into three categories: rent, markets and the state. Each can be implicated in sharecropping and other forms of agrarian contract.

Rent

Sharecropping, by definition, consists of rent payments from tenants to landlords in the form of a share of the total output in kind, its cash equivalent or a combination of both. It is distinct from both fixed rent tenancies, where rent payments are set in advance of production and are independent of farming output, and labour rents (corvée) common in feudal societies but which persist in parts of the Global South, where peasants are obliged to spend a part of the week working on the land of local lords or elites (Brass, 1999). Through a relational lens, sharecropping systems serve as a method of capturing surpluses, with rent as the mechanism through which this is achieved (Pearce, 1983). What makes rent a relation of exploitation here is that wealth is acquired by landlords not through their labour or a productive activity, but by their exercising control over productive resources, above all private property. While land is the most obvious of these resources, rent may also include payments on the other means of production, such as equipment and fertilizers where these are supplied by either the landlord or tenant. The literature on sharecropping is extensive (Hamzaoui, 1979; Byres, 1983a; 1983b; Bhaduri 1973; 1986; Pertev, 1986; Bharadwaj, 1985; Jarosz, 1991; Van Onselen, 1993; Kayatekin, 1996; Srivastava, 1999; Brass, 1999; Garrabou et al., 2001; Rao, 2005; Nyantakyi-Frimpong and Bezner Kerr, 2016). What has been observed in studies of sharecropping is that the share of the crop yield, or its market value, that goes to landlords will tend to rise where tenants' contribution of productive resources is lower (Kayatekin, 1996). In instances where landlords bring additional resources beyond land, what sharecroppers hand over in rent is made up of rent on land and rent on those resources. Where sharecroppers contribute some of their own resources, they are engaged in two processes simultaneously: one a 'fundamental class process' of performers of surplus labour, and the other a 'subsumed class process' where they receive rents on those resources which they themselves possess and have contributed (Kayatekin, 1996). While sharecropping agreements stipulate an agreement to share of the crop or its market value, erosion of that share in one or the other's favour has been found to occur through deductions and additional demands on labour power made by landlords (labour

rent) on the one hand, and by 'everyday' forms of resistance in the case of labour on the other (Cooper, 1983; Scott, 1985; 2013; Kerkvliet, 2002; 2005; 2009).

Markets

Capture of surpluses can occur through the buying of labour power in the classic sense, but it can also occur through market exchanges beyond the production sphere but which are nevertheless tied to it (Olsen, 1996; Harriss-White, 1999; 2003; Jan and Harriss-White, 2012). Market exchange as an "indirect" (Olsen, 1996, p.7) form of exploitation can be "an essential complement to primary exploitation that takes place through production relations" (Jan and Harriss-White, 2012, p.45). Much of the research into exploitation through exchange has explored "actually existing markets"[16] (Harriss-White, 1999, p.1) in India using tools from formalised political economy (Jan and Harriss-White, 2012; Bhaduri, 1973; 1986; Bharadwaj, 1985; Srivastava, 1989; Harriss-White, 1999; 2008; Olsen, 1999). It considers markets as mechanisms of resource extraction and labour exploitation, the phenomenon of 'interlinked' markets, and the role of traders, moneylenders and companies. Here, interlinking refers to when open market exchanges are substituted for a single agreement or contract that ties together distinct transactions such as land, labour and credit (Jan and Harriss-White, 2010). These contracts are common in rural production, are usually highly personalised, and tend to operate in favour of the more powerful party. Bhaduri (1973) for instance developed an early model of markets in West Bengal that theorised the phenomenon of 'forced commerce'. In the model, sharecroppers who found themselves in permanent states of debt were compelled to sell their crop at harvest time for ruinous prices in order to service those debts and to support household consumption. Since incomes were too low to do both, landlords would continue to extend consumption loans to their tenants at high rates of interest while resisting productivity improvements that might free tenants from debt relations through the gradual improvement of their incomes. Other studies have looked at how landlords, traders, input suppliers and companies act as distributors of agricultural inputs and production credit, securing in turn access to resources and labour power (Srivastava, 1989; Glover and Kusterer, 1990; Little and Watts, 1994a; Swain, 1999; 2000; Sahu et al., 2004; Pattenden, 2016; McMichael, 2013b).

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[16] As opposed to abstract models in mainstream economics. According to Harriss-White (1999, p.2), the economist's market "is the realm of voluntary exchange, free within the law. It is a realm of allocation according to the relative preferences of participants looking only to their advantage according to an impersonal mechanism, neutral among the desires of individuals. It is the supreme medium for the expression of individual choice. Generalised under perfect competition, markets ensure the maximisation of productivity according to principles of static comparative advantage." 'Actually existing markets' in contrast "exhibit great diversity in contractual arrangements and in the type and degree of non-contractual social obligations which accompany economic transactions […] Organisationally diverse and institutionally complex, nested in relations of class, ethnicity, religion, gender and locality, bound to states formally through regulation and taxation, and informally through two-way relationships of predation, clientelage and accommodation" (Harriss-White, 1999, p2).

Bharadwaj (1985) suggests some implications of transactions that are interlinked in such ways.[17] First, combining transactions takes away farmers' ability to exercise choice in other markets. For example, the tying of production credit to an agreed output market, typical in commercial contract farming means farmers are usually required to produce according to a set of imposed standards while also prohibited from selling their product elsewhere, even if prices are better (Little and Watts, 1994b; Watts, 1994; ActionAid, 2015).[18] The effect is that closed options can weaken "the possibility of the indebted party recovering from a dependency situation, especially when there are no alternative means of livelihood" (Bharadwaj, 1985, p.13). Recent attention in the literature to the phenomenon of farmer suicides in both commercial and so-called 'backwards' areas in India has referred to relations of dependency, falling incomes, rising costs, rent and especially debt as factors in the "dislocation" of livelihoods and as driving communities to despair (Sridhar, 2006; Mishra, 2008; Deshpande and Arora, 2010; Dongree and Deshmukh, 2012; Sadanandan, 2014; Singh et al., 2016).

The second implication is that the power to exploit is greater across markets that are linked together than in single markets alone. According to this view, surplus extraction is enhanced through interlinked markets that cover different activities and may extend to incorporate the family labour of future generations (Bharadwaj, 1985). Agrarian contracts and agreements such as sharecropping and contract farming are therefore viewed through a relational lens with some suspicion – not necessarily as win-win agreements freely entered into by equal parties for mutual benefit, but rather as "an expression of unequal economic power among the contracting parties" (Bhaduri, 1986, p.269). Agrarian contracts may obscure or mask inequalities in what might on the surface appear harmonious exchanges (Clapp, 1994). Bargaining power, Bhaduri (1983, cited in Byres, 2003, p.247) suggests, is a meaningful concept

> *only if both parties enjoy more or less symmetrical economic power. This is hardly the case when a landlord confronts a pure landless tenant with meagre and uncertain alternative employment opportunities.*

The state

Exploitation by the state has historically been considered in terms of taxation on peasant households, and on farming inputs, outputs and exports (Ellis, 1993; Harrison, 2001). In the second half of the twentieth century these mechanisms played a role in strategies for national development in much of the Global South, where resources and surpluses were channelled

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[17] The implications of interlinked markets are contested depending on whether the perspective is residual or relational. For a review of the literature, see Mishra (2008)

[18] For a review of the literature and debate on contract farming, see Oya (2012).

into and away from agriculture for supporting the development of industry.[19] With neoliberal policies replacing Keynesian demand management in the 1980s, attention has turned to how state efforts to decentre themselves in national development has facilitated "the extraction of surplus labour from direct producers" (Das, 2007, p.354) by other actors (also Campling et al., 2016; Bernstein, 1981; Bush, 2007; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2007). Das (2007, p.353) suggests the state remains as relevant as ever because while it

> *has withdrawn from welfare provision for poor peasants and workers in rural areas,* [it] *has taken active steps to promote agrarian and agribusiness capital accumulation at all levels, from local/regional to national/international. Hence the support extended to contract farming and the production of luxury farm goods […] [S]tate withdrawal, therefore, is active intervention on behalf of capital.*

At the same time, the literature has drawn attention to the sometimes-blurred lines between state and private, non-state commercial actors, such as landowners, traders and agro-industrialists in these contexts, and to the complex combinations of economic and political power (Mosse, 2010). States and state actors are implicated in patterns and practices of exploitation through their direct and indirect roles in rural production and through their interactions with private actors in formal governance structures. Fox (2007) for instance describes how rural elites based in urban areas were able to exercise control in the local state apparatus in Mexico in ways that enhanced their power over rural production. In North Africa, King (2009, p.182) and others have documented how market-oriented reform in the 1980s and 1990s facilitated the capture of rural- and urban-based industries and resources by "rent-seeking urban and rural elites, along with a state bourgeoisie composed of upper-echelon state and military officials that have moved into the private sector, taking state assets with them" (also King, 2003; 2007; Bellin, 2002; Heydarian, 2014).

With that said, the state is very much an ambiguous entity because while it may facilitate the conditions for capital accumulation and class exploitation it is also the main guarantor of fundamental rights and citizenship. This has made it an historically important arena for advocacy work and social mobilisation on the part of organised actors pursuing social change. A subset of relational approaches to poverty has begun to assess the quality of political institutions, representation, citizenship in terms of their implications for poverty and strategies

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[19] Much of the peasant resistance literature has considered resistance to state appropriation, such as studies by Kerkvliet (2005), Scott (1985) and Viola (1999).

for poverty reduction (Hickey, 2010; Mosse, 2010; Bebbington et al., 2010; Williams et al., 2012).[20]

Insecurity

The lack of predictability or certainty about the "informal and social conditions" (Wood, 2007, p.109) through which livelihoods are pursued and basic needs satisfied constitutes a form of socio-economic insecurity. For the rural and urban poor, feelings of uncertainty can be exaggerated, Wood (2007; 2001; 2003) maintains, because of their lack of resources, their inferior position vis-à-vis more powerful actors, and their vulnerability to hazards and shocks. Underlying this insecurity is exposure to various types risk, which in farming tends to include natural hazards such as weather and diseases, financial losses and shocks, but also relatively enduring 'structural' or relational risks associated with people's class position, exploitation and marginalisation (Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux, 2007; Wood, 2003; Mosse, 2010). Feelings of anxiety, stress and fear may accompany insecurity, which Wood (2007, p.114-115) suggests,

> *is strongly associated with the unknown, with uncertainty and unpredictability. It is associated with not knowing if one has the resources (mental, material and social) to cope with unassessable challenges. It is not knowing if one can discharge emotional and cultural responsibilities for kin and friends. It is not knowing whether one can protect oneself or offer protection to valued others in the present and future. Those who can, invest considerable resources in mitigating fear by reducing risk of failure and decline in all forms of wellbeing (emotional, material, objective and subjective). Those who cannot, remain in fear, which thus becomes a prevalent condition in countries with a high incidence of poverty.*

Uncertainty and risk aversion in poor households often guides the mobilisation of resources for short- rather than long-term objectives, and can circumscribe people's agency or 'autonomy'[21] in terms of their control over decisions, activities and relationships (Doyal and Gough, 1991; Wood, 2007; Mosse, 2010).

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[20] Discussing the poverty of seasonal migrants in India for instance, Mosse (2010, p.1165) suggests they experience "persistent exploitation partly because they do not have the power to defend their rights, to press cases for wage payment or injury compensation. They are excluded from justice by opaque procedures, informal agreements that leave no paper trail, and by the interconnected interests of more powerful actors (employers, lawyers, labour officers, even union representatives). Labour inspectors invariably ally with employers and have an interest in concealing rather than acting on information on exploitation or abuse. Even if cases get to the labour courts, they are likely to be resolved by compromise with few penalties for abusers."

[21] A relational understanding of autonomy rejects the liberal individualist notion as complete independence from other people, viewing it instead as "self-command and capacity for agency with the context of relationships and responsibilities that afford […] support" (Sayer, 2011, p.128).

Misrecognition

Misrecognition concerns what Schweiger (2014, p.151) has called the "phenomenology of the suffering caused by poverty," where resource deprived people are also deprived of the non-material conditions for their wellbeing. Social difference is established through relations of recognition and misrecognition, which for people in poverty

> *disrupts families, communities, and other relations of care and love, and* […] *affects the self and the identity of the poor. Participatory and qualitative research reveals the full breadth of such experiences of humiliation, shame, and hopelessness, which lead to a devaluation of oneself, withdrawal from social life, and isolation* (Schweiger, 2014, p.152).

Misrecognition plays a part in the psychosocial dimension of poverty and in human needs as a significant arbiter of people's sense of esteem, self-worth and identity as requirements for autonomy and self-realisation (Schweiger, 2014; Schweiger and Graf, 2014; Dean, 2010; Sayer 2005).[22] A number of poverty-related studies have suggested or shown how material depravation is strongly associated with feelings of shame, humiliation, and with feelings of powerlessness and lack of voice in people's relations with markets, landlords, employers, moneylenders and other actors (Chambers 1983; 1995; Narayan et al., 2000; Graf and Schweiger, 2014; Schweiger, 2014; Shah, 2012; Jo, 2013; Walker 2013; Lister, 2015; Walker, 2014). In Walker et al's (2013) cross-case study, threats to people's reputations and respectability could ensue when they borrowed money and fell into debt, and from the sorts of sanctions that might be imposed by landlords, money lenders and bailiff as a result (Walker et al., 2013). Failing to meet personal and social expectations and being judged a 'failure' by others was a driver of shame (Walker et al., 2013; also Jo, 2013). Failing to provide basic subsistence resources for the family such as food and clothing was considered the "epitome of shame and demonstrable evidence of having succumbed to poverty" (Walker et al., 2013, p.222). Responses to shame identified in the literature include social isolation, withdrawal and depression (Chambers, 1995; 1983; Narayan et al., 2000; Walker, 2014), and also anger and resignation expressed as

> *contempt for government and the unfairness of 'the system'* […] *Respondents were generally focussed on survival and convinced that the system was too big to change; often resigned to the belief that those with power, the 'them', would never listen or understand* (Walker, 2014, p.228).

Autonomy depends on relationships with others, Sayer (2011, p.129) notes, though dependence "can be good or bad, empowering and supportive or disempowering."

[22] Sayer (2005) and Dean (2010) suggest that people have an underlying 'need' for recognition.

In another study, Shah (2012) identifies farmer suicides in India as a response to collective memories of scarcity, humiliation, and social indignity.

2.3.5   Structure and agency

The structure-agency relationship and how it has informed several decade's worth of agrarian change literature has been subject to examination by da Corta (2010). In simple terms, the field has succeeded in moving beyond a narrow structuralism that left little or no scope for human agency in favour of more nuanced understandings from the 1970s onwards which recognise these interact or intersect in complex ways. The shift is best understood as part of a wider set of developments within the field from the 1970s onwards (and especially the 1980s) that responded to and incorporated into it elements of post-structuralism, which was on the rise at the time.

In its early years, the field was informed largely by a Marxist social science which at that time tended to be teleological and deterministic, viewing the world "in terms of grand structures while pluralism was associated with the much-despised liberalism, unable to see the structural wood for the interest-group trees." (Sayer, 2000, p.5). In its analyses it tended to exclude a great deal from "those ostensibly all-embracing, all explaining discourses – notably gender, race, sexuality and much lived experience" (Sayer, 2000, p.5). The agrarian change literature of the time can be characterised in these terms to a large extent: often narrowly focussed on class and transitions from pre-capitalist modes of production to capitalism through analysis of the productive forces and relations of production; an absence of other relational lenses, such as gender; a focus on proletarianization of the peasantry; a view of the state as a capitalist state and the elite as capitalist elite; and limited room for agency.

In the context of feminism, anti-racism, and post-colonialism, Sayer (2000 p.30) suggests that this social science began to undergo profound change as a reaction "against homogenizing and reductionists tendencies […] [in favour of] nuance, complexity and sensitivity to local, lived experience", and that researchers began reacting to reductionist accounts "by shifting to middle range theory and empirical studies." The result in the field of agrarian studies was a reaction against absorbing empirical data into grand theory in favour of more grounded analyses that mixed Marxist methods of class, history, struggle and transformation with village studies the could get to grips with economic, social and cultural realities (da Corta, 2010; also Bernstein and Byres, 2001). The implications for agency in the field were profound, giving rise to what Akhram-Lodhi (2018) has referred to as the "intersectionality of structure and agency" in actually-existing structure and agency situations. What is meant by this is a consideration of power beyond orthodox emphases on assets, such as land, and their distribution in rural areas; and a movement away from depictions of actors as mere 'structural

dopes', such put forward by Louis Althusser and severely critiqued by E.P. Thompson (1978); towards thinking as well about how actors, as subjects, actually behave and position themselves (also Olsen, 2009).

This development came to characterise the field of the peasant studies and agrarian change after the 1980s. James Scott for instance shifted from a more structural approach to rural politics in *The Moral Economy of the Peasant* (1976) to a more actor-oriented one in *Weapons of the Weak* (1985), establishing a new research agenda on everyday forms of peasant resistance. Interventions from the subaltern school emphasised the viewpoints of oppressed groups and their creation of oppositional forms of culture and identity (Bernstein and Byres, 2001) while structural explanations for the so-called 'peasant wars' gave way to grounded empirical studies of rural-based social movements and advocacy organisations and groups (e.g. Wolford, 2010). Others such as Van der Ploegg (2008, p.265; also Long, 2007) have gone on to locate much of the agency of farmers in their everyday, ostensibly non-political, farming practices:

> *resistance resides in the fields in the ways in which 'good manure' is made, 'noble cows' are bred and 'beautiful farms' constructed. As ancient and irrelevant as such practices may seem [...] they are increasingly vehicles through which resistance is expressed and organized.*

From the year 2000, this shift became even more pronounced when Saturnino M. Borras Jr. took over from Henry Bernstein as editor of the Journal of Peasant Studies and the journal came to adopt a "pluralist heterodox standpoint, continuing to publish papers within an explicitly Marxist framework but also publishing work rooted in critical non-Marxist social theory that nonetheless was rooted within a structure – agency framework" (Akhram-Lodhi, 2018).

In respect to rural poverty, the place of agency in agrarian change became increasingly elaborated in terms of this structure and agency intersection. Its retaining of a structural analytic however continues to distinguish its work from residual perspectives on poverty, which as mentioned in section 2.3.2 operate through a highly voluntaristic framework. In the relational research, da Corta (2010) notes that research from India in the 1990s was shedding light on how labourers were using their agency to exit bonded labour arrangements and moving into high remunerating off farm employment. Other studies challenged grand theory by revealing how class relations could move backwards as well as forwards (i.e. not simply towards proletarianization), such as where small commodity producers switch to subsistence farming in situations of high price risk and where free labourers enter into situations of bonded labour. And Olsen (2009) has demonstrated how tenant farmers succeed in affecting the

system of norms and negotiate and enforce 'proper' behaviour by strategising in reference to structural relationships and past events.

2.4   Summary

This chapter has brought together the literatures from transformative justice and rural poverty studies to reflect on a transformative justice concern for the needs of populations, communities and groups in transition societies. The first part of this chapter assessed the transformative literature as limited for empirically examining and explaining the unmet or frustrated needs of communities, populations and groups in transition societies, appraising it as largely a manifesto for change directed toward the field rather than a body of scholarship for researching and programming for social transformation. Two core issues were identified. The first was that the 'root causes' of harms have been left largely unexamined in the literature, meaning there is little to offer for unpacking and generating new knowledge about the causes of unmet or frustrated needs. This issue was described as representing an 'epistemological gap'. A second issue was that what is meant by 'transformation' in the transformative literature is vague and undertheorised, and is conceptually limited for empirical research concerned with root causes and with where transformation might be effected in practice. The literature gives little indication of what social change is and how it happens, as well as why change might not happen and why states of affair may persist. The second part of this chapter began moving towards an 'epistemological agenda' for transformative justice for addressing this epistemological gap. This unfolded through a discussion of concepts. A critical realist perspective on needs was proposed for the research framework in which 'need' serves as an entry point for looking at how human potentials are shaped by a complex of political, economic, social and cultural arrangements that are historically situated. Applying these questions to rural poverty and sharecropping brought us toward an analytical lens favouring more 'relational' concepts and explanations. These concepts can be employed for understanding how need frustration and denial is tied to the way society is organised. Historical analyses of sharecropping and other forms of agrarian contract making were drawn on and the sorts of need-frustrating processes and mechanisms identified which we might also expect to find in the rural context where this study takes place.

Chapter 3 Philosophical and methodological framework

A significant part of what constitutes science is the attempt to identify the relatively enduring structures, powers, and tendencies, and to understand their characteristic ways of acting. Explanation entails providing an account of those structures, powers and tendencies that have contributed to, or facilitated, some already identified phenomenon of interest… (Patomäki and Wight, 2000, p.223–224).

Introduction

Responding to the epistemological agenda for transformative justice in this research involves adopting critical realist philosophical and methodological framework which applies a realist ontology and epistemology. This chapter is the first of two which aim to respond to the sub-question, *how can the causes of need frustration be examined?* This chapter draws out and describes the critical realist ontological and epistemological assumptions that inform the study and its methodology while the next chapter shows how the research was implemented. The high level of detail provided in this chapter is necessary due to the novelty of the approach and the rarity of applied critical realist studies more generally. It begins with a short description of critical realism as a philosophy of science in section 3.1 before moving onto an extended discussion of some of the key elements that define a CR approach in 3.2: its epistemological assumptions, its focus on causation and explanation, ontology, open and closed systems, and the importance of hermeneutics for social research. Sections 3.2 and 3.3 illustrate what critical realist causal explanations consist of and introduces its approach to dealing with structural reproduction and transformation. The elements and features of CR outlined in this chapter inform decisions that were made around research practice, such as matters of research design, conceptual framework, methods, research questions and mode of reasoning. These are discussed in the next chapter.

3.1   Critical Realism

Critical realism (CR) has become increasingly recognised as a valuable approach for social science research. It is a relatively new philosophical paradigm, associated most notably with the British philosopher Roy Bhaskar, who laid out its foundations in the second half of the 1970s. At that time, empiricist philosophy of science had been shaken by Kuhn and Feyerabend's assault on positivism and empiricism and the subsequent emergence of relativism, while in the philosophy of the social sciences, interpretive approaches had become significant, anti-naturalist alternatives (Sayer, 2000; Bhaskar, 1998). These interpretive approaches however suffered from a "tendency to reduce social life wholly to the level of meaning, ignoring material change and what happens to people, regardless of their understandings" (Sayer, 2000, p.6). In this context, Bhaskar sought to refound the

philosophies of natural science and social science in opposition to these orthodoxies (Jessop 2005). He began with experimentation in the natural sciences which led him to establish the presence of real objects, structures and mechanisms that exist independently of human knowledge or our capacity to measure them empirically. From this, he developed a general philosophy of science termed *transcendental realism* which offered a "third way" (Sayer 2000, p.1) between positivism and empiricism on the one hand and relativism on the other (Bhaskar 2008). Shortly after, Bhaskar turned to the social sciences and developed *critical naturalism* as an alternative to positivism and interpretivism, but which drew on elements of both for providing new approaches to knowledge development (Bhaskar 2008a; Wynn Jr. & Williams, 2012). The term *critical realism* was coined a little later on as a shorthand for these two terms. CR has been taken up in a range of disciplines including economics (Lawson 1998; 1999), human geography and sociology (Sayer, 2000; 2010; Forsyth, 2003; 2001), and political theory (Jessop, 2005). Appendix 1a summarises the key metatheoretical elements of critical realism in relation to positivism and social constructionism.

3.2 Critical realism and social science

3.2.1 Epistemology: the transitive and intransitive dimensions of scientific inquiry

Critical realism holds the ontological position that the "world exists independently of our knowledge of it" (Sayer 2010, p.4). This independent world consists of objects, mechanisms and structures, which may be natural or social. CR distinguishes between the *transitive* and *intransitive* dimensions of scientific inquiry: the intransitive dimension is the object of scientific inquiry – that is, the independent world that scientific research aims to generate knowledge about; while the *transitive dimension* comprises those ideas and theories, or knowledge, about the intransitive dimension. CR plays an important role in theory development, with theories serving as the "raw material" (Collier, 1994, p.53) of scientific practice. Theories and concepts reflect (or should reflect) the best approximation to what exists and is happening in the world (Collier 1994). For critical realism, these theories can only ever be approximations because there is unlikely to be a perfect fit between theories and the world they attempt to explain (Wynn & Williams 2012). Knowledge about the world develops and deepens over time, with new concepts, ideas and theories replacing old ones. Knowledge may also be shown to be mistaken. But given that the world does not change in line with changes to our knowledge about it, CR holds knowledge to be fallible (Bhaskar 2008a).

A focus on causation

The need for an approach to examining root causes in this study leads to critical realism as a useful philosophical framework for developing powerful causal explanations that can account for particular events or social phenomenon. CR approaches do this through a mode of transfactual argument that refers to the 'real' objects, structures and mechanisms that generate

those events or phenomenon (Bhaskar 1998; Sayer 2010). CR approaches aim to answer the question, 'what must the world be like for the event, *E* to be possible?' and it does this through an inferential mode of reasoning referred to as retroduction (or abduction) (Bhaskar 1998; Sayer 2010). CR's conception of causation and mode of reasoning make its social science approach distinct from other philosophical and methodological traditions. The latter view causation in terms of 'cause' and 'effect': on the side of positivist empiricism, research follows a Humean conception of causation where cause is established by identifying statistical regularities among sequences of events. In *A Realist Theory of Science*, Bhaskar (2008a) rejected this model and the neo-positivist, deductive nomological model attributed to Popper and Hempel as inadequate because it was unable to deal with objects beyond empirical reach (structures and mechanisms) and because the explanations they generate consist of law-like statistical relations rather than qualitative descriptions of real causal mechanisms. On the other side, while interpretivists accept this positivist conception of causality they either reject it as non-applicable to the social world or reduce it to explanations of actors' own understanding of their behaviour or conduct (meanings), and often without reference to the material dimensions of reality (Sayer 2000). For realist approaches to social science,

> *the conventional impulse to prove causation by gathering data on regularities, repeated occurrences, is therefore misguided; at best these might suggest where to look for candidates for causal mechanisms. What causes something to happen has nothing to do with the number of times we have observed it happening. Explanation depends instead on identifying causal mechanisms and how they work, and discovering if they have been activated and under what conditions* (Sayer, 2000, p.14).
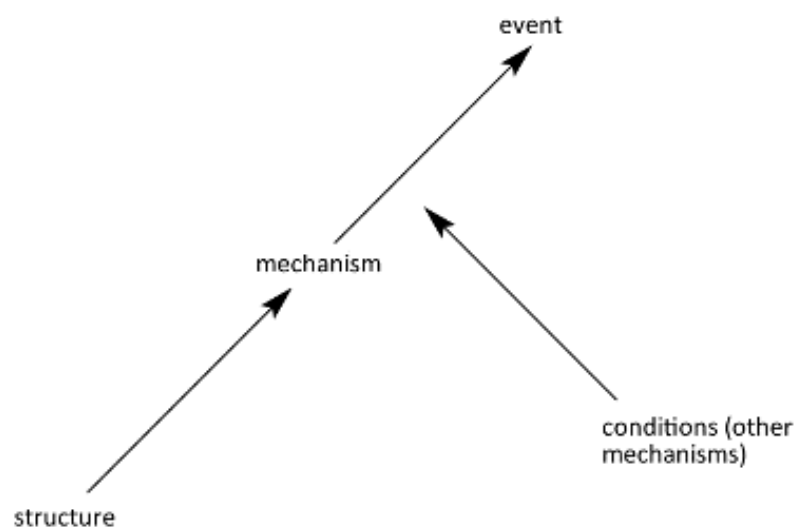
Figure 1. Critical realist view of causation (Sayer, 2000, p.15).

This is the aim of critical realist approaches to social inquiry. A cause can be identified "if it is the case that some event *E* would not have occurred, under the conditions that actually prevailed but for (the operation of) *X"* (Bhaskar, 2008a, p.111). Here, 'event' refers to the "external and visible behaviours of people, systems and things as they occur, or as they have happened" (Easton, 2010, p.120). It can refer for example to an activity like the submission of an exam paper, but also to a situation or phenomena, such as poverty, illness and so on. CR causal explanations detail processes whereby events are generated by causal *mechanisms* under the conditions prevailing in a particular context and time (Wynn and Williams, 2012). They are explained in terms of both the interpretations of the actors involved and by the mechanisms which interact to produce particular outcomes (Figure 1). Mechanisms, as we will see below, refer to the *causal powers* and *liabilities,* or "ways of acting" (Sayer, 2010) of particular objects and structures.

Ontology: An ontological realist position

Some of critical realism's ontological assumptions I have already mentioned or alluded to. These are that i) "that the world exists independently of our knowledge of it" (Sayer, 2010, p.4); ii) that natural and social *objects* existing in the world have particular *powers* and *liabilities*, or "ways of acting" (Sayer, 2010, p.4); and iii) that reality is *differentiated* and *stratified*, "consisting not only of *events*, but *objects*, including *structures*, which have powers and liabilities capable of generating events. These structures may be present even where, as in the social world and much of the natural world, they do not generate regular patterns of events." (Sayer, 2010, p.4).

By holding the world as existing independently of our knowledge of it, as indicated in i), CR suggests an ontology which is *stratified*. The ontological realist position of CR distinguishes between three overlapping domains of reality: the 'real', the 'actual' and the 'empirical' (Table 3). The 'real' comprises the structures and causal mechanisms, natural or social, which may exist independently of our knowledge of them. The 'actual' consists of events, that is, what happens when 'real' structures and mechanisms are activated. These are subject to realist inquiry and are explained in terms of the structures and mechanisms in the 'real'. The 'empirical' refers to our experience of events through observation, measurement and so on. Their stratification shows how structures and mechanisms are ontologically distinct from the events they generate, just as events are ontologically distinct from how they are experienced by people (Bhaskar 2008a). An example from the natural world might be a lightning strike. A lightning strike is an event occurring in the domain of the actual, while the mechanisms that generate it belong to the real. Our experience of it belongs to the empirical because the strike would presumably have occurred whether or not we had been around to see it. Realist approaches to the social world aim to understand what is going on in the domains of the actual and the real by making inferences from their experienced effects (Oliver, 2011).

	Stratified ontology		
	Real	Actual	Empirical
Mechanisms	X		
Events	X	X	
Experiences	X	X	X

Table 3. Stratified ontology (Bhaskar 2008, p.47).

Open and closed systems

This ontological position is quite different to that of empiricism. Empirical research assumes observation is sufficient for gaining ready access to the world, thus implying a 'flat ontology' that reduces reality to what can be observed (Bhaskar 2008a). Easton (2010) notes that this view is often espoused by natural scientists, whose research involves experimentation in 'closed systems' of the natural world. The purpose of experiments is to create these closed systems so that it is possible to isolate one mechanism in nature from the effects of other mechanisms in order to see how it behaves (Collier, 1994). When a causal mechanism is successfully isolated in a closed system "we can say 'every time A occurs, B follows', as in Humean causality" (Collier, 1994, p.34).

Social science deals with social rather than natural objects. In the social world, people's behaviour, action, capacities for learning and so on, influence and alter the objects and mechanisms in their environment (Sayer 2000) and we do not have the means to suspend the effects of various mechanisms on something. Social science is therefore forced to work with much messier 'open systems' of stratified reality, where "invariant empirical regularities do not obtain" (Bhaskar, 1998, p.49). Even if we tried to manipulate and control various different social influences to study their effects, doing so would create a new social situation which research participants would interact with and react to (Danermark et al., 1997). For critical realism, approaches informed by orthodox philosophy of science and its methods are "totally inapplicable" (Bhaskar, 1998, p.49) to the study of the social world because they presuppose the possibility of experimental closure in open systems.

The importance of hermeneutics

The ontological position of CR is at odds with strong forms of social constructionism. Interpretivist inquiry considers reality in terms of social actor's own understandings of it while strong forms of interpretivism reject the idea that reality can exist independently of those understandings (Sayer 2000). While CR rejects these on the account that our experiences in the social world provide only a partial picture of reality, it admits that social science's dealing with social objects means it inevitably has to engage with questions of experience and meaning. Social objects, relations, structures and practices are reproduced by people and cannot be

understood in isolation from the meanings that people ascribe to them (Bhaskar 1998). Description of reality, critical realists maintain, is mediated through language, meaning-making and social context (Oliver 2011) and this implies an important distinction between social and natural science inquiry. As Sayer (2000, p.17) observes:

> *critical realism is only partly naturalist, for although social science can use the same methods as natural science regarding causal explanation, it must also diverge from them in using 'verstehen' or interpretive understanding. While natural scientists necessarily have to enter the hermeneutic circle of their scientific community, social scientists also have to enter that of those whom they study.*

This lays out the importance of interpretive, hermeneutic methods for CR approaches to social research. However, in contrast to interpretivist approaches such as those most recently influenced by strands of post-structuralism and post-modernism, critical realism insists on the relationship between meanings and "the material circumstances and practical contexts in which communication takes place and to which reference is made" (Sayer 2000, p.17). Though this relationship might seem rather obvious, a great deal of contemporary social science ignores or underplays the material dimensions of social life or reduces it merely to matters of discourse. For example, much post-development theory downplays or ignores the material basis of poverty and construes it instead as a discursive construct produced by the Global North for managing the Global South (see for example, Escobar, 1995).

3.2.2 Components of a realist causal explanation

Having laid out some of the key assumptions underlying critical realism and the social sciences, I move on to describe in more detail the various realist components (or building blocks) of CR causal explanations: *objects, relations*, *structures, powers and liabilities*, *mechanisms*. All of these terms have been mentioned already but they require more detailed descriptions. In doing this, I build up towards a presentation of the general structure of CR causal explanations. This step is a necessary one for making sense of the findings presented in subsequent chapters.

Objects

Objects may be anything natural or social, such as people, resources and attitudes. CR approaches aim to understand the 'nature' of these objects and how they behave and act in terms of their properties, relations and powers. This requires asking qualitative questions about them (Sayer 2010). What makes CR approaches different is that objects – not variables – serve as the basic "building blocks" for developing explanations (Easton, 2010, p.120). Objects are different to variables because variables are measurements of things used for identifying

empirical regularities, while objects are the things themselves about which qualitative questions are asked.

Relations

Objects are almost always related to other objects and they are related in different ways. CR distinguishes between two of types of relation: *substantial relations* and *formal relations.* A substantial relation means that there are real connections or interactions between two objects while formal relations imply that there is merely similarity and dissimilarity (Sayer 2010). Within substantial relations, CR also distinguishes between *internal relations* and *external relations* (figure 2). An internal relation is one where an object is what it is because of its dependence on another object (Sayer 2010). The relation between a landlord and a tenant for instance is both *substantial* and *internal* because there is real connection and interaction between them and some relation of dependency. The nature of the dependency in this particular example is once of symmetry, since a landlord cannot exist without a tenant and a tenant cannot exist without a landlord. In this case, the landlord-tenant relation is a *symmetric internal relation.* Bhaskar (1998, p.46) explains it as follows:

> *A relation R_{AB} may be defined as internal if and only if A would not be what it essentially is unless B is related to it in the way that it is. R_{AB} is symmetrically internal if the same applies also to B.*

Asymmetric internal relations occur where one object can exist on its own but the other depends on it. For example, as a student my relation to the university is asymmetrical because the university can exist without me as a student but I cannot be a student without the university.
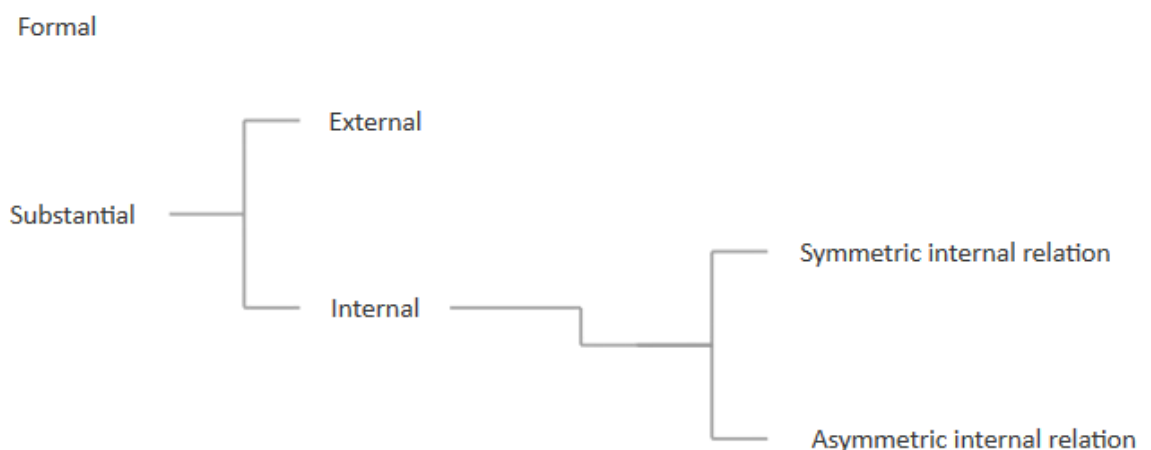
Figure 2. Different types of social relation (Danermark et al, 1997).

Internal relations do not have to be harmonious, as Danermark et al. (1997, p.47) note, and "often include one-sided dominance, such as the classic examples master/slave, capitalist/wage labourer and man/woman."

An external relation in contrast is one where "it is neither necessary nor impossible that [an object] stand in any particular relation" (Sayer, 2010, p.60). The relation between a tenant and her university for example is external because each can exist without the other. From these examples, we can see that by working with objects and their relations we are considering *aspects* of people and things rather than those people and things in their entirety. CR research involves abstracting out relevant aspects (objects) and their relations from the research setting. A research participant may be a tenant, a homeowner, a father, a cat owner, and a variety of other things, and careful abstraction requires distilling out those aspects which are relevant to the research and leaving aside those which are not. As well as this, abstraction requires further locating objects and their relations within *structures* and identifying their associated *powers* and *liabilities*.

Structures

A social structure is "a set of internally related objects or practices" that involve human social relationships and have a temporal durability (Sayer, 2010, p.63; Smith, 2010) The landlord-tenant relation for instance is part of an enduring social structure involving people and their relation to other objects, such as private property and rent. Other examples of structures might be a market system or an organisation. They may also be natural phenomena, such as those described by chemistry and in animal physiology. But social structures and natural structures differ in fundamental ways, as Bhaskar (1998) noted. First social structures, as social products, "exist only in virtue of the activities they govern" (Bhaskar 1998, p.41). They both constrain and enable human action, consist of material practices, and are reproduced through human agency. Their nature as social products means they can also be subject to transformation and change (section 3.3.1 below). Second, because they are social products, structures "do not exist independently of the conceptions that the agents possess of what they are doing in their activity, that is, of some theory of these activities" (Bhaskar, 1998, p.42). Activities and structures carry some meaning among the people implicated in them, even if that knowledge is imperfect or skewed. Again, as social products these theories may also be subject to transformation and change. Third, though structures are enduring, the possibility of their transformation and change means that social structures, unlike natural structures, are "only relatively enduring" (Bhaskar, 1998, p.43). This point informs the emancipatory axiology of critical realism which is oriented towards revealing oppressive and unjust social structures and relations for the purpose of ultimately transforming them (Bhaskar 1998; 2008b; 2009).

People are usually embedded in multiple structures, and structures interlink and interface (Bhaskar 1998). The fact that we cannot isolate structures from one another in open systems exposes us to the risk of attributing to one structure something which is due to another (Sayer, 2010). Sayer (2010) suggests the best course of action is to pursue qualitative questions about objects, relations and structures in a typically realist fashion: What does the existence of this object presuppose? What is it about this object that makes it do these things? What is it about the structures which might produce these effects?, and so on.

Crucially, CR approaches distinguish between social structural positions, such as the landlord or the tenant, and the occupants of structural positions. That the person occupying the position of landlord may be male or female, pleasant or unkind, of one race or another is usually not an internal feature of the landlord-tenant relation itself but a matter of externality. That is not to say that the occupant is never relevant – a pleasant landlord is preferable to an unpleasant one – but that causal or other misattributions may ensue where there's confusion between structural positions and its occupants:

> *One of the most pervasive illusions of everyday thinking derives from the attribution of the properties of the position, be they good or bad, to the individual or institution occupying it. Whatever effects result, it is assumed that particular people must be responsible; there is little appreciation that the structure of social relations, together with their associated resources, constraints or rules, may determine what happens, even though these structures only exist where people reproduce them* (Sayer 2010, p.65).

The incorrect idea that high social mobility indicates the absence of social classes for instance is a good example of what happens when structures are reduced to the individuals occupying them (Sayer 2010).

Causal mechanisms: powers and liabilities

The term *mechanisms* refers to the "causal powers or ways of acting of structured things" (Bhaskar, 1998, p.187). They exist as "potentialities which may or may not be exercised" and which may not produce a regular pattern of events. For CR, a causal explanation is one which identifies these structured objects and their mechanisms which connect and combine to cause events to occur (Easton 2010). The *causal powers* of structures and objects refer to existing "capacities to behave in particular ways" while *liabilities* denote "susceptibilities to certain kinds of change" (Sayer, 2000, p.11). A labourer possesses the causal powers of being able to work which extend from, among other things, the physical and cognitive structures required for operating machinery. The same labourer may find these causal powers changed when their

susceptibility to physical injury is realised through a workplace accident. Powers and liabilities derive from the essential nature of the objects in question:

> *Gunpowder can explode by virtue of its unstable chemical structure; multinational firms can sell their products dear and buy their labour power cheap by virtue of operating in several countries with different levels of development* (Sayer, 2010, p.71).

In these examples, the causal powers or liabilities (explosion, selling and buying) derive from properties of the objects and structures (chemical structure, spatial operation). The presence of causal powers and liabilities, as causal mechanisms, does not necessarily mean those powers are activated however, and whether they are activated or not depends on particular conditions. The labourer, possessing the causal powers to work, may be unable to do so because there are no available jobs. Or a causal liability to workplace injury may be avoided by safe working conditions. In both cases, the causal power and liability exists but remains unactivated. In this way, we can attribute causal powers and liabilities to objects regardless of whether they are activated and hence, produce a pattern of regular, measurable events (Sayer 2010). As we will see, at any one time there are multiple causal mechanisms at play which interact, negate and reinforce one another (Oliver 2011), with the effects or events generated by them not fixed but a matter of contingency, depending on particular conditions.[23]

An important feature of objects and structures is that they cannot be reduced to their constituent parts (reductionism) since relations among objects "endow it with characteristics and tendencies that are distinct" (Wynn and Williams 2012, p.791). This is denoted by Bhaskar's concepts of *stratification* and *emergence*, which are important for understanding the formation of structures and causal processes. Stratification holds that objects consist of properties linked together across hierarchical levels or 'strata'. In a very general sense, we can move from a physical level and its properties up to a chemical level, and from a chemical level to a biological level before finally moving to a social level (Collier, 1994). Each new stratum "represents something entirely new, unique and qualitatively different, which cannot be reduced to underlying strata" (Danermark et al. 1997, p.60). Emergence is present "when the properties of underlying strata have been combined, [and] qualitatively new objects have come into existence, each with its own specific structures, forces, powers and mechanisms (Danermark et al. 1997, p.60).

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[23] Critical realism distinguishes between two concepts of 'power'. Power$_1$, which is being referred to here, denotes potential or possibility while power$_2$ denotes forms of domination, subjugation, exploitation and so on that are structurally instantiated. Both concepts of power are employed in this study.

Hence, powers and liabilities are emergent from their constituents but are not reducible to them (Sayer 2010). As Sayer (2010, p.71) observes, causal powers often "inhere not simply in single objects or individuals but in the social relations and structures which they form." Water for instance possesses the causal power to extinguish fire, but we identify this power as emergent from, but not reducible to its structure of hydrogen and oxygen. Taking an example from the social world this time, combining the physical and mental structures for operating machinery, among other things, generates a labourer's causal power to work. Emergence can be understood in terms of internal and external relations:

> *Where objects are externally or contingently related they do not affect one another in their essentials and so do not modify their causal powers, although they may interfere with the effects of the exercise of these powers… In the case of internally related objects, or structures… emergent powers are created because this type of combination of individuals modifies their powers in fundamental ways* (Sayer, 2010, p.80).

3.3 Putting together a realist causal explanation

With the various components laid out, this section shows how their integration makes up a realist causal explanation. As figure 3 shows, objects are internally related to their structure and their causal powers and liabilities. Yet they are only externally related to the conditions that generate events, and different conditions will produce different effects. 'Conditions' here refer merely to other objects, structures and relations. In practice, Easton (2010, p.122) notes that these formal explanations do not normally appear owing to the complexity of open systems. Nevertheless, they provide a framework for guiding researchers, and competing
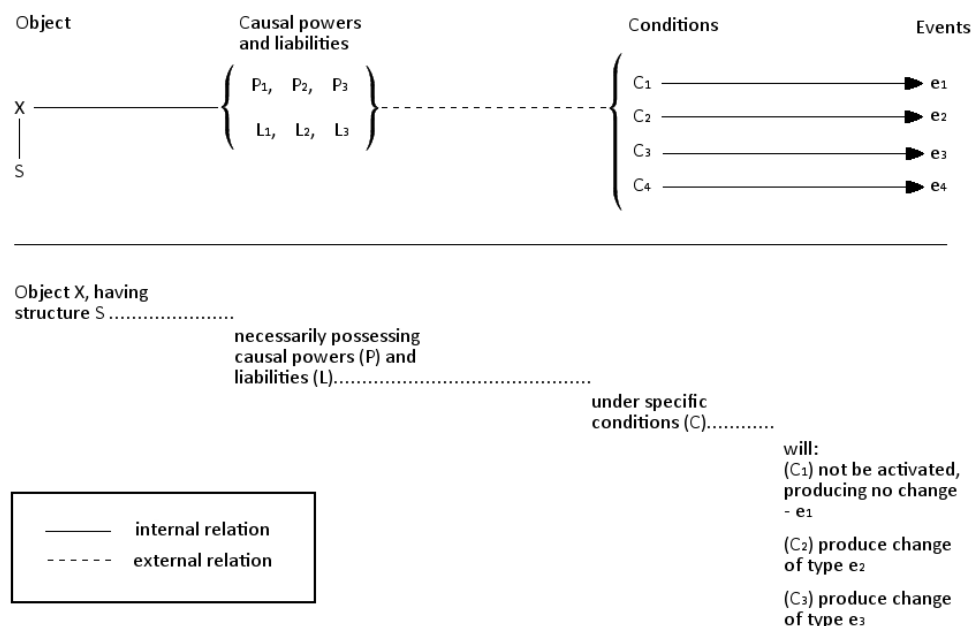
Figure 3. Realist causal explanation (Sayer, 2010, p.74).

explanations should be put forward and interrogated to ensure the best interpretation is made (Easton 2010).

3.3.1   Structure and agency, reproduction and transformation

Since CR deals with structures and agents, the relation between each is an important aspect of CR ontology. CR approaches to social research have to acknowledge and account for this or else run the risk of producing explanations that overemphasise voluntarism, such as is the case with residual perspectives on poverty, or which are too deterministic, such as some relational studies that draw on strong forms of Marxism, as mentioned in 2.3.5. Even if the main research question is one that is more structure- than agent-oriented, CR-oriented inquiry must account for agency as well as structure. Much ink has been spilled over matters of structure and agency in social theory more broadly and the aim is not to revisit those debates here. Within CR there is also a diversity of views on the topic (Bhaskar, 1998; 2009; Smith, 2010; Jessop, 2005; Archer, 1995; Hay, 2002). Generally speaking, CR is neither structuralist nor deterministic, but nor is it voluntaristic. The approach taken here rests on the approach originally outlined by Bhaskar (1998; 2009; 2016), illustrated in Figure 4 and subsequently elaborated on by Margaret Archer (1995), which suggests that social forms pre-exist agency; that agency is enabled or constrained by these social forms; and that these are reproduced or transformed through the activities of human agents, which may be intentional or unintentional.[24] As Bhaskar (2016, p.55) explains,

> *agents are always acting in a world of structural constraints and possibilities that they did not produce. Social structure, then, is both the ever-present condition and the continually reproduced outcome of intentional human agency. People do not marry in order to reproduce the nuclear family or work in order to sustain the capitalist economy. The social world is nevertheless the unintended consequence (and inexorable result) of, as it is a necessary condition for their activity.*

The transformational model of social activity is distinct from other perspectives in that 1) it treats neither agency nor structure as a dependent variable, as exhibited in Durkheimian and social constructivist stereotypes in the case of the former and Weberian and utilitarian stereotypes in the case of the latter; and 2) that social structure and human practice are treated as ontologically distinct rather than conflated, such as in Anthony Giddens' influential theory of 'structuration', with the implication that each can be analysed separately.

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[24] Archer's (1995) morphogenic/morphostatic model introduced the idea that structure and agency operate at different time periods, with structural reproduction or transformation entailing three temporal phases: structural conditioning, sociocultural interaction and structural elaboration/reproduction.
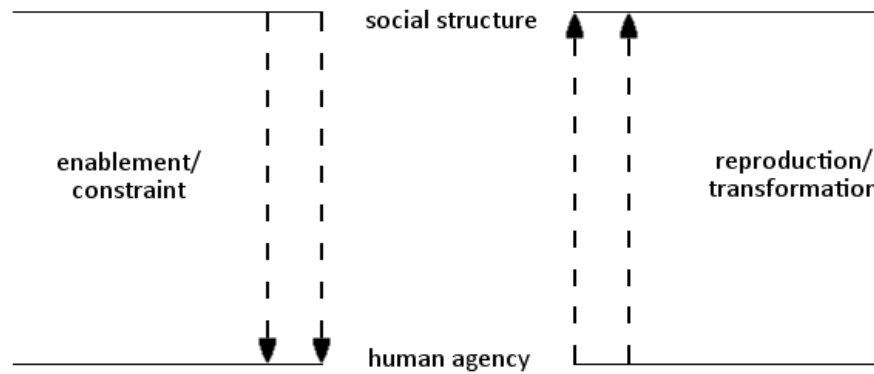
Figure 4. Transformational model of social activity (Bhaskar, 2009, p.85).

The social structural positions referred to in section 3.2.2 and the practices that exist in virtue of those positions represent "slots" (Bhaskar, 1998, p.44) in social structures that people slip into in order to reproduce or transform structures and the "point of contact" between human agency and social structure. While Bhaskar (2016, p.64) argues that social structure is mostly reproduced unconsciously, transformation of structure is possible because structural conditioning is always "mediated by the actuality or possibility of reflexive deliberation by the agent on the course of action to be followed." People may benefit from social structures like the family, but resistance to, subversion of, or ultimate transformation of structures may follow when people "recurrently find themselves aggravated, restricted, oppressed, and dehumanized by structures" (Smith, 2010, p.343). The social conditions that facilitate or limit efforts at transformation vary on a case by case basis however, as do people's capacities to resist or subvert them (Bhaskar, 2016).

For peasant studies and agrarian change, CR approaches to structure and agency such as Bhaskar's reveal how the behaviour of actually-existing structures depends on influences or conditions outside of them, which includes how the people implicated in them respond. Class relations or class structures for example give rise to particular powers, such as the capacities of one class to constrain the agency of another, but whether and how these are activated or not depends on conditions such as economic change, chance, the presence or absence of associational powers (farmer organisations etc.) and so on. Change is not determined by structures but is viewed "as evolutionary – path-dependent yet contingent, shaped by legacies yet affected by contingently related processes or conditions" (Sayer, 2000, p.26).

3.4   Summary

This chapter has outlined the philosophical and methodological elements and features employed in this study and which informs decisions made around the research design, such as the conceptual framework, methods, research questions and mode of reasoning. These are discussed in more detail in the following chapter. This study has described critical realism as a philosophy of science and social science that suggests we can pursue causal explanations in

open systems through the discovery of causal mechanisms. These mechanisms inhere in structured objects as potentials, as powers and liabilities, whose activation or inactivity is contingent and hence may not produce a regular pattern of events. Putting together a causal explanation involves accounting for these objects, structures, powers and liabilities and conditions. This chapter has also referred to a way of dealing reproduction and transformation in terms of Roy Bhaskar's 'transformational model of social activity' and Margaret Archer's subsequent elaboration. The model is one which navigates between more voluntaristic and more deterministic accounts of social change.

Chapter 4 Methodological design and implementation

Introduction

Having rather abstractly laid out the philosophical and methodological elements and features of the study in the previous chapter, this chapter summarises the methodological design and implementation. These should be consistent with CR ontological and epistemological assumptions. The chapter begins with a presentation of the research questions and the rationale for exploring them through 'intensive' and 'concrete' case research. It outlines what an abductive or retroductive research design implies in practice and discusses what some of the implications are – namely, that the literature review takes a particular form and that there is a need for theory generating techniques in the analysis stages. The pre-fieldwork preparations are discussed followed by an overview of data collection, ethics and informed consent. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of how the data was analysed using techniques from grounded theory.

4.1   Research questions

This research is organised around two main research questions and several sub-questions. The main research question is as follows:

> o   What are the needs of sharecropping farmers on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain? Why are their needs frustrated?

The case study location is included in the main research question since the study does not intend to generalise from the sample to all sharecropping farmers in Tunisia. It intends to account for need generation through an examination of local context. In realist terms, human needs become satisfied or frustrated when sets of causal powers or liabilities become activated under conditions with which they are only contingently related. The study aims to look, first, for empirical evidence of human suffering that might be redescribed through a CR conceptualisation of need and, second, the particular societal arrangements (conditions) that generate these events. Sub-research questions are as follows:

> o   How can the causes of need frustration be examined?

A response to this research question began in Chapter 3 and continues over the course of this chapter. Chapter 3 has outlined a critical realist philosophical and methodological framework and its value for generating causal explanations by examining people's everyday experiences and the underlying relations, structures, conditions and mechanisms which make events occur. This chapter describes the methodological design of this thesis and how the research was implemented. Chapter 8 reflects on the utility of the approach, once it has been applied to the

case. The approach outlined is one which applies critical realism with techniques from GT for answering the remaining sub-questions:

- o What evidence is there for the frustration of particular needs?
- o What are sharecroppers' grievances and priorities for change?
- o What are the mechanisms and conditions under which these needs are frustrated?

4.2 'Intensive' and 'concrete' case research

For answering these questions, the study adopts a research design which is 'intensive'. By 'intensive', what is meant is a narrow, focussed type of research design which aims to unpack causal processes in a particular case by drawing on mostly qualitative, interpretive methods (Sayer 2010). For exploring events, actions, structures and contexts, and for identifying and explicating causal mechanisms in a CR way, case research is one of the better research methods (Wynn and Williams 2012; Easton 2010; Ackroyd and Karlsson, 2014). The type of account it produces is a causal explanation of a phenomenon based on the study of causal groups and relations of causal or structural connection. Ackroyd and Karlsson (2014, p.24) suggest realist case research identifies

> *a context in which a specific causal mechanism is identified and explored. The aim of research is to bring to light formative processes which cause particular outcomes, when they operate, and which are best conceived in their totality or as near to it as possible.*

This type of design is distinct from 'extensive' forms of research design which are concerned with the discovery of common properties and patterns within populations and which depend on methods such as large-scale surveys, formal questionnaires, and standardised interviews. As discussed in chapter 2, these are commonly employed in residual approaches to poverty. In contrast to intensive research, these deal with taxonomic rather than causal groups and with relations of similarity rather than connection, while the data of generated through them is subject to statistical and numerical rather than qualitative analysis (Sayer 2010). An extensive research design could feasibly be applied to this main research question in a way that resembles residual analyses of poverty: needs could be broken down into variables around which data would be gathered, and relationships to other variables, such as household income, gender etc., tested through regression analyses. As discussed earlier though, this type of research is limited however because it leads to findings that lack causal depth.

While extensive research aims to generalise from a representative sample to a larger population, intensive research designs cannot do this. In intensive research, individuals and groups are sampled based on what is interesting about them and their connections, and these

are almost always context specific: structures, relations and mechanisms will not be identical from one place to the next, making attempts to generalise in the same way problematic. For this reason, knowledge claims from case studies are often attacked for their lack of generalisability. Generalisation nevertheless remains possible in case cases studies in terms of their contribution to theory. According to Yin (1989, cited in Easton, 2000 p.214), case studies, like experiments, are "generalisable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a 'sample', and the investigator's goal is to expand and generalise theories (analytical generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization)". From the research findings, we can at best generalise in terms of the processes, relations, mechanisms, powers and liabilities of structured objects on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche Plain.

As well as being 'intensive' research, the fact that it deals with "actual events and objects" (Sayer, 2010, p.159) in a particular case also make it a form of 'concrete' research. Actual events and objects here refer to the people interviewed over the course of the fieldwork, their stories of suffering, difficulties, hardships and so on. Concrete research is distinct from 'abstract' forms of research which concern themselves with structures and mechanisms in isolation from the events they generate (Sayer, 2010). Concrete research nevertheless requires incorporating some measure of abstraction and theory building in order to deal with structures and mechanisms and conditions. The abstract-concrete dimensions of concrete and abstract research is illustrated in Figure 5.
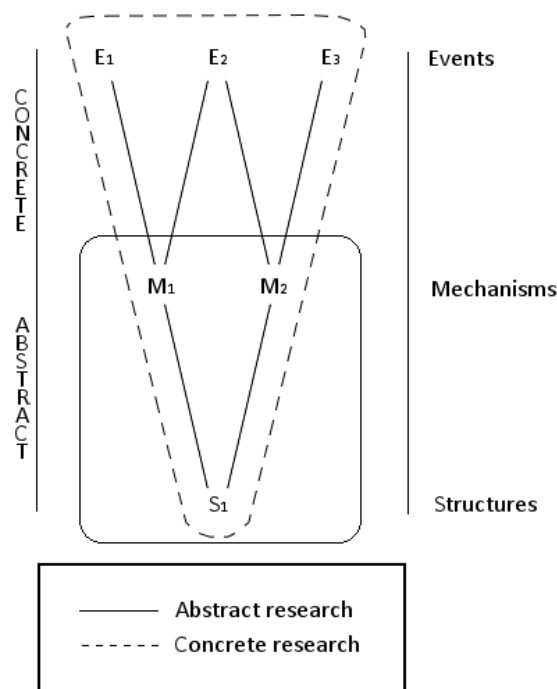
Figure 5. The concrete and abstract dimensions of intensive concrete research. (Sayer, 2010, p.159).

4.3   Retroduction/abduction

In social research, induction and deduction are the most commonly used modes of inference. In CR approaches, how we move from events to mechanisms and structures hinges on a mode of reasoning referred to as 'abduction'. In CR philosophy, the process is called 'retroduction', which "is simply abduction with a specific question in mind" (Oliver, 2011, p.10), though the terms are used interchangeably in the social science literature (Richardson and Kramer, 2006). According to Sayer (2010, p.72) retroduction in CR philosophy is a

> *mode of inference in which events are explained by postulating (and identifying) mechanisms which are capable of producing them* […] *In many cases the mechanism so retroduced will already be familiar from other situations and some will actually be observable. In others, hitherto unidentified mechanisms may be hypothesized.*

An overview of the differences between induction, deduction and abduction is supplied in Appendix 2a. Abduction has been suggested as appropriate for case research (Dubois and Gadde, 2002) and is consistent with more recent approaches to grounded theory (Charmaz 2006; Oliver, 2011; Timmermans and Tavory 2012; Richardson and Kramer, 2006). This research employs a retroductive or abductive research design, with the main research questions phrased in a way that invites reasoning along abductive lines. The questions, 'What are the needs of sharecropping farmers on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain? Why are their needs frustrated?' are descriptive and causal. They involve asking basic qualitative questions about the phenomenon of interest, such as: what are needs? How do we conceptualise needs? What is it about the world that makes these people have needs? What produces them and what can account for them? Why is this so? Through abduction, some prior theory is always drawn on for answering such questions because we

> *perceive the phenomenon as related to other observations either in the sense that there is a cause and effect hidden from view, in the sense that the phenomenon is seen as similar to other phenomena already experienced and explained in other situations, or in the sense of creating new general descriptions* (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012, p.171).

Another important qualitative question becomes therefore: what existing knowledge or theory can help answer such questions? Besides having the research questions formulated in a particular way, there are other implications of adopting an abductive or retroductive research design. These are: the form of literature review and the need for theory generating techniques.

4.4 Further implications for research design

4.4.1 The form of literature review

Review of existing knowledge and theory informs the way the objects of study are conceptualised. In practice, conceptualisation and review are continual processes, occurring before, during and after data collection. New data emerges, new or alternative interpretations made, and concepts are tested and employed or jettisoned. A literature review in a CR research project will reflect the formal outcome of that process and will attempt to do several things. First, it will attempt to "distinguish more realistic from less realistic theorizing, often drawing on a historical analysis of the phenomena under study" (O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2014, p.14). Chapter 2 discussed competing conceptualisations of need and poverty as frameworks that yield profoundly different explanations. Second, a literature review "will seek to identify the mechanisms that a researcher might expect to be at play in the research area and the contexts in which these might be best studied" (O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2014, p.14). Chapter 2 also did this in its discussion of relational concepts such as exploitation and classes of labour. And third, a literature review may also "seek to identify gaps concerning the interplay of mechanisms and contexts which warrant further study" (O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2014 p.14).

4.4.2 The need for theory-generating techniques

Because retroducing mechanisms and deciphering contexts is also a theoretical task, this case study had to incorporate analytical techniques for applying theory to the data and for generating explanatory theory. CR adopts a flexible approach towards methods, where methodological decisions are informed by the nature of the phenomenon and what we want to know about it rather than by any theoretical and disciplinary proclivities (Bhaskar, 2016; Sayer, 2010). As practitioners have increasingly sought to apply CR in recent years, an emerging stock of empirical research has examined the suitability of a range of methodological approaches and techniques. These have included case studies (Parr, 2015; Easton, 2010); ethnography (Rees and Gatenby, 2014); discourse analysis (Sims-Schouten and Riley, 2014); mixed methods (Maxwell and Mittapalli, 2010); action research (Houston, 2010); and Fletcher's (2016) 'flexible deductive' CR approach. The mainly interpretive and qualitative nature of these approaches is deliberate and attuned to posing qualitative questions about relationships and actors' reasons, the nuances of social context, and of CR causal mechanisms and how they work.

One approach suggested as useful for synthesising data and making inferences about causal mechanisms and conditions is grounded theory (Oliver 2011; Kempster and Parry, 2011; 2014). GT is a prominent qualitative methodology in social research, and its movement from empirical data towards abstract theory resonates with the CR requirement to move from data about events and effects towards a causal explanation that accounts for them (Kempster and

Parry, 2011). In an emerging conversation among applied critical realists about how to apply the meta-theory, GT has had both its advocates and detractors (Fletcher, 2016; Sum and Jessop, 2013; Danermark et al., 1997; Oliver, 2011; Kempster and Parry, 2014), but the debate thus far has unfurled through abstract discussion and without reference to concrete applications.[25] On the side of the detractors, grounded theory's inductive and empiricist qualities raise compatibility issues vis-à-vis the abductive character of critical realism and its notion of stratified reality (Fletcher, 2016; Sum and Jessop, 2013; Danermark et al., 1997). They maintain that the GT idea of avoiding pre-existing theory at the beginning of social research, and that idea that theory 'emerges' from the data constitutes a kind of 'naïve empiricism' that provides little for getting beyond surface appearances and towards root causes.

Several areas of agreement between GT and CR have been identified by Oliver (2011) however in what is perhaps the most comprehensive assessment of their compatibility. Perhaps the most significant of these are the contemporary developments within GT practice which has taken the methodology out of its inductive and empiricist caricature and turned it into something resembling a "family of methods" (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007, p.11) that can operate across different epistemologies (Oliver, 2011). Early GT sought to formulate claims about objective reality, but more recent constructivist engagements have harnessed its techniques for studying processes of meaning-making and working with meanings and actions which are tacit or muted, and which may not surface in empirical data (Charmaz, 2006; 2017). A parallel shift within GT practice away from induction towards abduction has further brought GT into alignment with CR's mode of inference. While early GT required avoiding the literature, today's practitioners are able to handle "preconceived analytical categories" and to draw on "pre-existing theoretical knowledge, hunches and hypotheses as necessary 'points of departure' and building blocks for the development of more abstract theory" (Oliver, 2011, p.10; also Strauss, 1987; Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Kempster and Parry, 2011; 2014; Kelle, 1995; 2007; Thornberg, 2012). The shift towards abduction has followed the need for practitioners to contend with the theory-laden nature of observation and the logical problem that induction cannot by itself generate theories (Appendix 2a)[26] (Kelle, 2007; Reichertz, 2007;

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[25] There is a single illustration of a 'critical realist-informed grounded theory' (Kempster and Parry, 2011; 2014) in the literature which provided some direction for the application of GT techniques in this study. Kempster and Parry's illustration does not, however, draw on more recent developments within grounded theory that have made its techniques sensitive to pre-existing theoretical knowledge. This study in contrast has harnessed the more recent developments within GT for examining stratified reality and for developing explanatory theory.

[26] Reichertz (2007) suggests the public split between Glaser and Strauss in the 1990s over the role of pre-existing theoretical knowledge in GT is essentially one of abduction. While Glaser adheres to the classical formulation of inductive GT, where pre-existing knowledge is minimised, Corbin and Strauss (2008) adopted a flexible approach that more closely resembles an abductive approach to theory

Timmermans and Tavory 2012; Richardson and Kramer, 2006; Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Charmaz, 2006; Thornberg, 2012).

The decision to employ GT in this study counts on these shifts within GT away from the inductive variant first introduced by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s towards one which recognises that theory can – and even should – develop through abduction (Kempster and Parry, 2014; Oliver 2011; Timmermans and Tavory 2012; Richardson and Kramer, 2006). Kempster and Parry (2014) suggest a number of characteristics for what they have called 'critical realist grounded theory' which include:

1. Context-rich qualitative data collection;
2. Awareness that empirical data may be influenced by underlying mechanisms;
3. Refer to existing theory and ideas for informing data collection and analysis, as Timmermans and Tavory in the excerpt above also suggest;
4. Generate causal explanations drawn from empirical data or are postulated to be occurring;
5. Testing the emerging theory for practical adequacy from the perspective of the people involved the context;
6. To be offered to other researchers for critique.

The techniques borrowed from Grounded Theory (GT) were: constant comparative method, memo-writing, open coding and axial coding. These are explained in 4.6 below. I am only able to claim drawing on 'some techniques' from Grounded theory rather than the entire GT package since it was not possible to employ GT's systematic theoretical sampling method during data collection, largely for practical reasons.

4.5   Gathering data

4.5.1   Pre-fieldwork and case selection

Fieldwork was undertaken over the period September 2015 to January 2016. In the 5 months leading up to the fieldwork, I attended intensive Tunisian Arabic classes in Tunis to obtain some basic command of the language with which to converse with research participants. Funding for these classes was provided by the ESRC's 'Difficult Language Training' award, granted in March 2015, for an initial period of 9 months. Classes began in Tunis at the end of March with this 9-month period in mind, but concluded after 5 months to begin fieldwork. This decision had to do with a deteriorating security situation in the country and uncertainty as to whether the research space would continue to remain open.

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building. Reichertz (2007, p.215; also Kendall, 1999) has dubbed the dispute the "Glaser-Strauss controversy" and both camps have their followers.

Alongside these Arabic classes, my other main pre-fieldwork preoccupation was to prepare the requirements for a 2-3 month data-gathering period in rural Tunisia. At this point in time, this research project was underpinned by a symbolic interactionist paradigm through which I sought to understand and explain how rural actors in the context of Tunisia's transition were challenging the terms and conditions that governed the way resources were produced and distributed. The aim upon arrival in Tunisia was to find a suitable fieldwork site to conduct this research, aware that the choice of case selection can make or break a research project. In order to identify a suitable case, I counted on the support of a local partner organisation to the Transformative Justice research project, the Tunisian Women's Association for Research in Development (AFTURD). Over the course of several meetings, we discussed the research and identified some possible fieldwork locations: a Feija community in Jendouba, a community of farmers in Gafsa, another community around Sidi Bouzid, another in El Kef and Kasserine, and a community on the Cap Bon peninsula. In the end, the fieldwork eventually took place in Cap Bon, which is a relatively safer and quieter part of the country where human development is higher. Two main factors influenced the choice of Cap Bon during case selection. First, the security situation in Tunisia which deteriorated after June 2015 saw Jendouba, El Kef, Kasserine and eventually Gafsa closed off as secure places for conducting research. Even before the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) advised against all but essential travel to the whole of Tunisia, both the FCO and the University of York's travel advisory group, The Global Security Centre, had recommended caution during travel to parts of Jendouba, El Kef and Kasserine. Second, the partner organisation disagreed that a scoping exercise was required, preferring instead that the fieldwork site was chosen in advance and the first visit made only with the interview questions to hand. With a state of emergency declared over the summer months and an anticipated rise in social discontent over the autumn

months and a spate of ethical dilemmas, Cap Bon remained the only feasible option for completion of the fieldwork.[27]
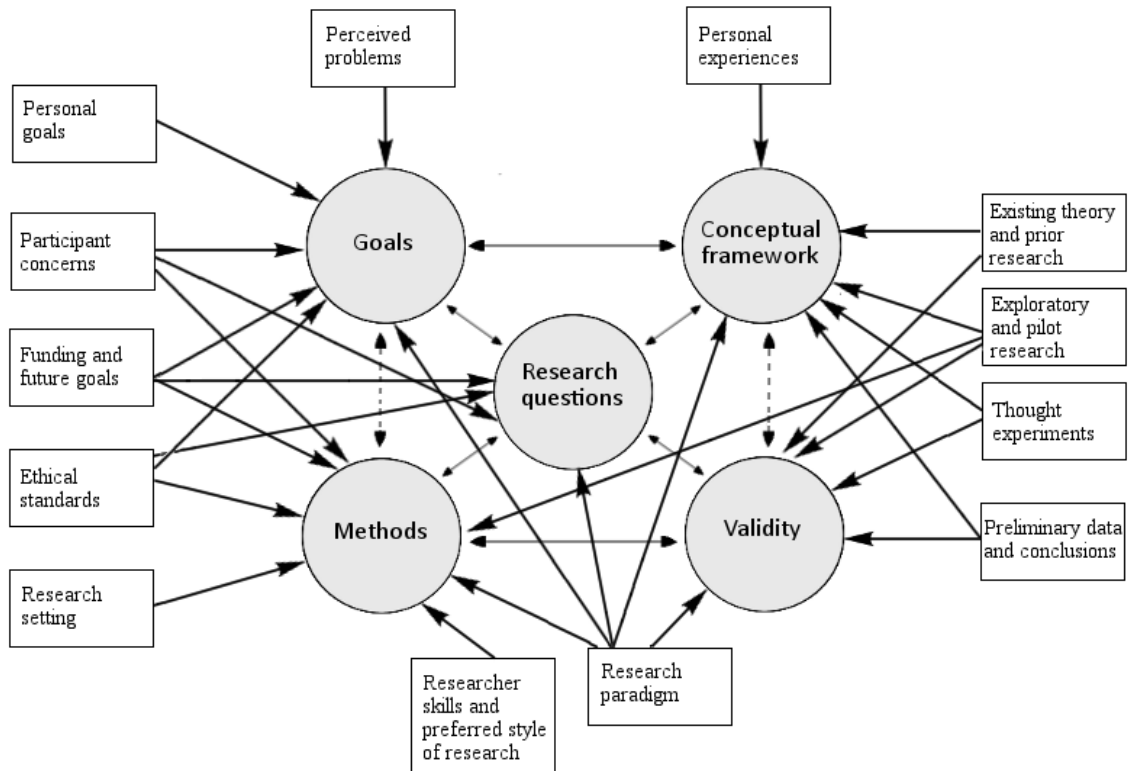
Figure 6. Factors influencing an interactive research design. The interactive research design is represented by the shaded circles and influencing factors by the unshaded squares (Maxwell, 2012a, p.81).

Having had the case decided in this way however, I anticipated arriving in the in the field and not being able to explore rural politics as the original topic of interest. Specifically, the relative calm of Cap Bon and absence of the kinds of overt advocacy politics and social mobilisation such as that found in the interior parts of country was a sign that I might not find what I was looking for. In anticipation of this, I began explicitly reorganising the research design from one that was rather static to one that was 'interactive' (Maxwell 2012a). The move, which involved as much psychological preparedness as it did practical measures, meant entering the field with full recognition that the core features of the research design, including the research

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[27] There is additional background to this because the first 10 months of this research project, from January to November 2014, was organised around preparing for empirical research in Egypt. That project was eventually abandoned largely for ethical reasons in favour of an alternative site in Tunisia. This was due to the closing space for research in a context of growing military repression, where NGOs were being shut down and its members subject to litigation, and researchers and journalists arrested. The government had also been propagating stories about Western researchers as foreign spies, and I struggled to find a partner organisation for conducting research into rural mobilisation. In the end, it seemed the research would incur too many risks and that these risks did not justify the benefits. I was introduced to AFTURD in Tunisia by Simon Robins and Imen Ghedhioui and the research went ahead there as described. About a year later, an Italian student at Cambridge University, Giulio Regeni, was abducted and killed in Egypt while conducting research on unionisation, very likely by the country's security forces (Stille, 2016).

questions, all influenced one another and could radically change depending not only on what was happening in the field but in relation towider contextual factors and what was happening in the field. By this point in time the design had already been influenced by the contextual factors described above, but this step made it explicit: what became necessary was to acknowledge, observe and record the variety of additional factors at play, how they appeared and influenced features of the design both before and during fieldwork, and how they should be responded to. In this way, the research resembled Maxwell's (2012a) realist exposition of what an 'interactive' research design might look like and the sorts of influencing factors that can come to bear on it (Figure 6).

At the same time this was happening, I was exploring whether CR had any potential for moving transitional/transformative justice a step beyond the identification of victims' needs towards developing understandings of how those needs are structured and frustrated. This initial work became the basis of the ideas developed in this thesis, at the time allowing me to potentially flip the main research question if needed from one that was actor-oriented (how are rural actors challenging existing terms and conditions?) to one that was structurally-oriented (how are needs frustrated?). Flipping the research question once in the field allowed the research to continue in response to the realities in Cap Bon, and it explains why the research has taken the form it has here.

The final main preoccupation of the pre-fieldwork period was to hire an interpreter to accompany me in the field. The partner organisation recommended a local from the area who would also identify and recruit the research participants and organise some of the logistics. The interpreter was a local from Cap Bon, recently graduated from university with a degree in English Literature, and with some experience in conducting interviews. She was a friend of one of the researchers in the partner organisation but not herself affiliated to the organisation in any way. After an informal interview in central Tunis, she was recruited and a contract was signed shortly thereafter. As part of the pre-fieldwork preparations, we held a fieldwork skills training workshop at AFTURD to help prepare the interpreter for the fieldwork, covering some critical topics such as qualitative research, sampling, semi-structured interviews, translation, managing data, and ethics.

4.5.2 Types of data

A variety of data types were gathered in the field and subsequently analysed. These were semi-structured interviews and observations in the form of visible practices and informal conversations, all of which were recorded in a fieldwork diary.

Semi-structured interviews

42 semi-structured interviews were conducted on the plain, two of which were practice interviews for 'entering the field'. These two interviews aimed to pilot and test the initial interview questions and to help develop the working relationship between myself and the interpreter. Though these interviews were intended for practice, they have been included in the interview count because the data they yielded was useful and provided some directions for the following round of interviews. Also present during these practice interviews was the President of AFTURD and the organisation's Head of Research, both of whom offered critical feedback on interview technique and gaining consent. All in all, these 42 semi-structured interviews were the main source of data and were completed over several stays in Cap Bon over the September 2015 – January 2016 period (Appendix 7a).

Semi-structured interviews were considered the most appropriate method for data gathering and are typically used in GT Ideally, the interviews would have been supplemented by an extended time in the case study region using participant observation methods or even ethnography, yielding thus far more data and insight. Choice of methods however always has to be weighed in relation to other factors such as costs, security and so on, and semi-structured interviews were settled on as the best option. Once the interviews were over, they were either transcribed or, for those occasions where research participants declined to be recorded, summaries were drawn up instead.

The interview questions were initially drawn up in collaboration with AFTURD before fieldwork commenced. Over the course of the fieldwork, a number of questions were modified, others were dropped and new ones were added, as is common in this type of research. The duration of the interviews ranged from 40 minutes to an hour and 40 minutes, with the variation is explained mostly by the availability of the research participants, who were often quite busy. They were almost always conducted in participants' fields, although occasionally interviews were held inside their homes or on the side of the road. The typical interview began with a discussion about what the main difficulties were that participants faced around their livelihoods and how this impacted on them and their households directly. The interview would then move onto participants' specific farming practices, eliciting from them an idea of the actors, relations and exchanges around farming and to understand these in historical perspective. By the end of the fieldwork, interviews had become centralised around questions concerning tenant farmers' relations with landlords and with private sector actors, both of which exert considerable control over the terms and conditions of production on the plain.

While we sought to interview participants on their own, they would occasionally be accompanied by family members or friends who either observed in silence or became full

participants. If the main research participant was male, other people present would usually listen in silence but if it was a female then male relatives were more likely to intervene. It would have been culturally inappropriate to request visitors to leave, though very often the interviews were made richer by the presence of other family members. Consent was gained from anyone who arrived at the interview later on. Participant responses and the questions we asked were always measured and considered in relation to who was present.

Sampling

Consistent with intensive research, participants were mostly sampled one-by-one, based on what was interesting about them and by what we wanted to know. Since this was not an extensive study, we did not need to draw up a set of criteria and then adhere to it throughout in order to ensure representativeness (Sayer 2010). Our sampling resembles grounded theory's 'theoretical sampling' method to the extent that we decided where to go and what to collect as ideas developed. It only resembles theoretical sampling however because it was not guided by a simultaneous and systematic coding and analysis of interview transcripts, owing to the time lag between conducting the interviews and receiving the texts. To try to deal with this, a period of several days or more was spared between fieldwork trips in order to, among other things, review interview notes, obtain some transcripts, listen to the audio recordings, return to the literature and to discuss next steps with the interpreter. We would then return to the field equipped with an updated set of questions for exploring new and old areas in more depth. This does not compromise the rigor of the research; rather, it simply means that the fieldwork and coding stages of the analysis took longer than usual and insights from the data that would have a bearing on sampling would come more slowly.

There were a few exceptions to this sampling method however. Before fieldwork began, the partner organisation had requested a set of sampling criteria which we used as a springboard for entering the field. It only affected the first few interviews, including the practice interviews, and subsequent sampling took the form described above. The other exception was when, on occasion, we used snowballing. This technique was used in cases where we had an especially enthusiastic research participant who was happy to take us to someone they knew 'in similar circumstances' as their own.

Identification of research participants was conducted by the interpreter, who contacted and recruited participants. Her network of contacts was not a personal network, but a network based on reputation. On the plain, people might not know one another in person but they will likely know their names, members of their family what they do and their status and so on. On most occasions, the interpreter had not met the research participants prior to the interview but they were known to one another through parents or members of their extended families.

Usually, research participants were contacted in advance and either gave us a specific interview time or told us to arrive at a particular period of the day. Snowballing however meant the potential research participants had no prior warning of our arrival, and we occasionally needed to schedule a time to return on a different day.

One of the main sampling challenges was obtaining female research participants. Though we strove to sample an equal number of men and women, the relatively small number of female research participants (7 in total) is likely to mean a male bias in the findings and meant having little reliable insight into family and kinship structures. In Tunisia, men are usually considered head of the household and tend to speak on behalf of the family. They make the key farming decisions, do the buying and selling, and control the income. My arrival and wanting to ask questions about the family's livelihood normally led women farmers to refer us to their husbands. Because we did not anticipate this, the challenge became clearer as fieldwork progressed. One way to have addressed this would have been through focus groups, which was discussed with AFTURD in the meetings prior to fieldwork, and in particular all-women focus groups. Yet for matters of resources (namely financial, because the project was already over budgeted, and the lack of group facilitation skills in Arabic) these were ruled out at the beginning. Chapter 9 reflects on this methodological challenge and its implications for the analysis. On the seven occasions we were successful in sampling women the interviews were extremely insightful however. Quite unexpectedly, my profile as a western male was in some respects more of an asset than a hindrance: according to AFTURD, male Tunisian researchers would face additional barriers above my own in trying to sample and interview female research participants. Besides these 7 interviews, the voices of women farmers were present in some of the family interviews as well, though they often spoke in the presence of male members.

Observations

Observation was an additional data gathering method, used both inside and outside the formal interview context. Observations were recorded in a fieldwork diary, the aim of which was to generate a source of data that would render more visible additional aspects of the wider social milieu than interviews alone. Observations were recorded on what people did i.e. their practices, such as the obvious gender division of labour during peanut harvesting; and what they communicated, usually during informal conversations.

Informal conversations

Fieldwork involved much more than 42 interviews (Illustration 1). Informal conversations were commonplace, occurring in all sorts of situations outside of the formal interview context. Moving around and getting from place to place, accepting invitations into the house for coffee, chatting to family members, and picking and bagging peanuts in the fields would all involve

some communication. People would share their experiences and perspectives with us, telling us new and interesting things or corroborating what others might have said. The content of these informal conversations was subsequently noted in the fieldwork diary which was used for, among other things, guiding the sampling process.

Illustration 1. The researcher being shown how to operate a horse-drawn plough.

Informal conversations were often used in cases where snowballing had not worked well. At times we opted to shift these interviews into informal conversations when it was clear the people we were brought to would be unable to help shed light on some of the areas we sought to uncover. By switching to informal conversations, we could turn the meeting into an opportunity to leave existing interview questions aside and pursue new questions about that person's specific conditions and perspectives. For instance, on one occasion we were brought by a tenant farmer to a medium land owner elsewhere, even though we were only interested in sampling tenant farmers at that point. The land owner had been a tenant farmer up until the 1980s, so we abandoned the interview script and asked a range of different questions which ended up yielding new insights. Consent was obtained during these particular informal conversations and the content recorded as observations rather than interviews.

4.5.3 Ethics and informed consent

Matters of ethics and ethical conduct were taken extremely seriously throughout all stages of the research. Participants were small and tenant farmers with differentiated access to land and other resources, living in communities that have been subject to forms of marginalisation, exclusion, poverty and underdevelopment. Ethical issues and questions of ethical conduct were discussed with the partner organisation and the interpreter in the build up to data collection and during the fieldwork period. The organisation advised on identification of

research participants and approaching them, as well as interview questions and interview conduct. The organisation also advised on informed consent, and safety of research participants, myself and the interpreter.

Informed consent

For the semi-structured interviews, consent was obtained at the beginning of the interview, once an explanation of the research project and the purpose of the interview had been given (Appendix 7b and 7c). As part of the pre-fieldwork preparations, the interpreter was asked to translate the information sheet and consent form into Arabic so that she could understand and communicate exactly and accurately what was being asked of the research participants. As an additional step, the translated documents were checked for accuracy by a second translator, and doubts or misunderstandings discussed with the interpreter in advance of data collection. Once in the field, we read from the forms and obtained consent orally. This was the most appropriate form given the low levels of literacy among research participants.

Regarding observations, it is generally accepted that it can be difficult or impossible to obtain consent from everyone with whom the researcher has observed or interacted with. For instance, obtaining consent for my observation of gendered work in the peanut fields would have been impractical and unfeasible. Instead, researchers are required to conduct observations in ways that protect the rights of those involved. I did not acquire consent for a casual and informal conversations with NGO staff, my interpreter and people on the plain, though this probably would fall into the arena of implied consent. Guest et al. (2013) suggest three important points for researchers to consider in protecting the rights of participants and I outlined these on the University of York's ethics submission form in advance of fieldwork: first, the researcher must consider public or private nature of the venue, as well as public behaviour that may require consent. Second, the researcher must consider what data will be collected and how it will be analysed i.e. whether it is potentially compromising or in some way could undermine the wellbeing of participants. And third, the way the researcher presents himself in the venue i.e. how the researcher introduces himself and his research, which links back to implied consent.

Safety of research participants

Safety of the research participants during and after the fieldwork has remained the priority, and the fieldwork would not have taken place had it run the risk of compromising participants' wellbeing. Audio and transcript data was subject to the required storage and encryption procedures, which were also followed by the interpreter. The interpreter was also required to sign a confidentiality agreement where she would not disclose or communicate the content of interviews to anyone besides myself and the partner organisation. While we could guarantee confidentiality from the research team, we could not guarantee anonymity since our

movements on the plain were public and could be seen by passers-by. As mentioned above, family members and friends sometimes listened in on interviews and it is likely that anonymity would not be maintained. That said, anonymity is retained in the research outputs.

While Tunisia and the plain are not highly sensitive, some of the topics, such as the nature of landlord-tenant relations potentially were, and we had to tread extremely carefully in terms of the sorts of questions we asked and the way they were framed. We did not elicit socially or politically sensitive information or views, though these were sometimes volunteered and when they did we responded accordingly. While most participants agreed to having the interview recorded, almost a quarter preferred not to be, so notes were taken and an interview summary drawn up at the end of the working day. Occasionally, my interpreter and I would have to make situated ethical judgments, which often requires knowing what is and isn't culturally acceptable. The presence of the interpreter was therefore vital in helping to make some of those ethical decisions.

Illustration 2. The El Haouaria-Dar Allouche Plain, where fieldwork was conducted. The six fieldwork sites (Echraf, Sidi Madhkour, Erriadh, Abene, Dar Allouche and Haretchara) are located around the RR27 road that runs between El Haouaria on the northern tip and Kelibia, about 25km to the southeast. Source: OpenStreetMap.

Safety of the researcher and the interpreter

Safety of the researcher and the interpreter were also priorities. During recruitment of the interpreter we discussed whether there were any potential safety issues that might arise from our working together and from working on this research project. We discussed for instance the cultural differences, and whether there were any places, communities or neighbourhoods where we could not go to or people we should not meet. These were not major issues however, and the main risks to the interpreter were of the sort that are typical of any research involving interviews with disadvantaged populations, such as poor interview manner (not listening properly, lacking understanding and humility and so on), and the implications of not managing participants' expectations.

For the researcher, there were different risks that had to do with the profile of being a westerner in rural Tunisia. Cap Bon is slightly different to some other parts of Tunisia however, as mentioned earlier,

and these differences made it easier for someone with my profile to "fit in" there. Unlike some other parts of Tunisia, Cap Bon is relatively less closed and conservative. Its historical background is one of waves of immigrant communities, such as from Spain and Turkey. Nowadays, there are occasional tourists passing through the area, usually along the main road that joins the town of El Haouaria at the tip of the peninsula to the coastal town of Kelibia, about 25km south east (Illustration 2). Precautions were nevertheless taken to minimise risk exposure, as well as any risks to the interpreter that might be implicated by these. My presence in the field was eventually cut short towards the end of the 2015, when the deteriorating and unpredictable security situation suggested it wiser not to return to complete the remaining 6 interviews. The project interpreter finished the 6 interviews herself over December and the beginning of January 2016.

4.6   Data analysis

Having a chapter section on data gathering and a separate section on data analysis may obscure the fact they both occurred simultaneously in practice. As mentioned earlier, data analysis was ongoing as a requirement of the sampling method. The separation between them here is therefore an artificial one. That said, once data collection had finished and the transcripts and summaries completed, the data was analysed in a different and more systematic way. Interview data gathered in the field underwent two GT coding cycles. The first cycle consisted essentially of a 'categorising strategy' that broke the data down with open codes. The second cycle consisted of axial coding as a 'connecting strategy' that reassembled the data.

4.6.1 Open coding

First, interview transcripts and summaries underwent manual open coding in a line-by-line format, where each line of written data was coded. This form of 'microanalysis' is common practice in GT (Charmaz 2006) and is used at the beginning of data analysis. Open coding breaks open or 'fractures' (Strauss 1987) the data for the researcher "to consider all possible meanings" (Corbin and Strauss 2008), requiring them to look closely at what the participants say, consider multiple possible interpretations of what is said (and also what code best fits), as well as identify concerns or priorities that may be implicit as well as explicit (Charmaz 2006).

Some applied CR studies, such as Fletcher's (2016), eschew open coding in favour of applying extant codes drawn from pre-existing theoretical knowledge. The aim of this is to avoid a 'naïve empiricism' often associated with GT, where practitioners appear to code with 'empty heads'. The decision to avoid extant codes in the first cycle however was deliberate and intended to facilitate this consideration of 'all possible meanings' in the data, as per Corbin and Strauss' suggestion. This meant approaching the data not with an empty head, but rather with as open a mind as possible for remaining attentive to what theoretical possibilities it might contain (Charmaz, 2006; Dey, 1999). As such, the approach was consistent with Strauss' (1987, p.29, italics my own) depiction of the strategy as "grounded in data on the page *as well as on the conjunctive experiential data, including knowledge of the technical literature which the analyst brings into the inquiry.*" Particular codes and rough categories were anticipated to appear since the interview questions had been drawn up on the basis of insights from the literature and because participants were interviewed on the basis of what seemed interesting. The strategy also captured nuances in the data that were puzzling or unexpected, and this led me to return to the theoretical and empirical literature for insights into how to interpret and connect and compare them. In this respect, open coding involved both a deep exploration of the data and my relating these data to new and existing frames of reference, which an abductive approach requires.

During this first coding cycle, codes were recorded in a codebook along with their definition. Coding was kept on track during the coding cycles through the use of 'constant comparative method' (Glaser and Strauss, 1965) for identifying and exploring similarities and differences between cases. As the data was broken down into codes, tentative conceptual categories began to emerge which could capture several codes at once. Less relevant codes were jettisoned over the course of the first cycle, others were integrated into categories, and the terms chosen for the codes and categories were refined as the analysis progressed. Some of these categories served as central 'axes' (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p.124) around which second cycle coding was organised (below). Memo-writing was a continuous activity throughout all stages of data

analysis. As a technique from grounded theory, consistent and detailed memo-writing aims to serve as a space for reflecting on the data, how it's coded and categorised, for asking further questions of the data, and so on.

One requirement of the approach was the need to take steps to avoid losing sight of connections in the data as it was coded. This is because conventional coding in qualitative research consists essentially of categorising strategies that break data down into segments and arrange them into categories on the basis of similarity *rather than connection*. Connections among data segments are broken in the process, an act which lends itself to the positivist approach to causation requiring the identification of event regularities, such as where category A occurs, category B follows. As indicated in Chapter 3, critical realists have taken this approach to causation to task. As the data was 'fractured' during coding, it was therefore necessary to regularly return to interview transcripts and summaries and to review them so as not to lose sight of the connections each case would contain. Through memo-writing and diagramming, I was able to identify, keep track of, and explore these connections and compare them to other cases for similarities and differences. This connecting strategy alongside the categorising strategies was sufficient for this study, possibly because it was a single case and because the dataset was not especially large. However, had multiple cases and larger datasets been involved, it seems likely that other strategies would have been needed to keep these connections in sight.

4.6.2   Axial coding

Axial coding might be thought of a transitional cycle located somewhere between data and theory (Saldaña, 2009). While the purpose of open coding is to fracture, label and group the data, axial coding reassembles it by identifying linkages between data and categories. According to Strauss (1987, p.64) it involves, first

> *laying out the properties of the category, mainly by explicitly or implicitly dimensionalizing it…Second, the analyst hypothesises about and increasingly can specify varieties of conditions and consequences, interactions, strategies, and consequences… that are associated with the appearance of the phenomenon referred to by the category. Third, the latter becomes increasingly related to other categories.*

In other words, axial coding aims to answer questions about "who, what, when, where, how, and with what consequences" (Strauss and Corbin 2008, p.71). While open coding breaks the data apart as a 'categorising strategy' (Maxwell, 2012a), axial coding in Corbin and Strauss' (2008) recent formulation looks more like a set of 'connecting moves' that can be used to reassemble the data through its real connections or associations.

Inquisitive researchers feel the impulse towards reconstructing the data: because "as analysts work with data, their minds automatically make connections because, after all, the connections come from the data" (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p.198). Making these connections was automatic and rudimentary at first, but later developed subsequently into a formal axial coding cycle. Strauss' emphasis on 'conditions', 'actions' and 'interactions', 'strategies' and 'consequences' refers to a "coding paradigm" which he suggested was useful for conferring structure onto gathered data. However, this paradigm is rooted in symbolic interactionism and this makes it difficult to employ in a way that is consistent with CR. There are assumptions about structure and action that differ from CR, as well as about cause and effect that involve the identification of empirical patterns by comparing cases (Dey, 1999). To deal with this, the study took seriously the notion of a coding paradigm but drew on explicitly on CR ontology. This involved retaining the first requirement to lay out the properties of a category, but to proceeded through a modified coding paradigm where data would be coded instead for powers, liabilities and social structures. It involved moving, as Oliver (2011) suggests, from an action sequence of a social process as per conventional GT towards the structures, causal powers and liabilities, and ultimately the underlying mechanisms that shape events. Chapter 8 discusses the efficacy of this approach and the grounded theory techniques employed in the study in light of the findings.

4.7   Summary

This chapter and the previous have aimed as well to respond at once to the sub-question, 'how can the causes of need frustration be examined?'. The answer suggested here is applied critical realism using techniques from grounded theory. This chapter began by taking the more abstract philosophical and methodological elements described in the previous chapter, namely those pertaining to causality, social structures, mechanisms and so on, and describing the implications for methodological design and implementation. The chapter has introduced the research questions and discussed this study as an example of 'concrete' and 'intensive' research that adopts an abductive or retroductive research design which brings together empirical data alongside existing theory. This chapter also discusses the value of grounded theory techniques when recast in terms of abduction, and it has described the process of data gathering, including matters of ethics and informed consent. It has also described the steps involved in the data analysis. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 apply critical realism with techniques from grounded theory for moving toward the development of a causal explanation in Chapter 8. Chapter 8 reflects on the efficacy of the approach in light of the findings. Before that, Chapter 5, begins by providing an historical analysis to the case.

Chapter 5 From subsistence farming to commercial agriculture on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain

Introduction

As opposed to presenting a conventional background chapter in advance of the findings, this thesis provides an historical analysis that is considered part of the conceptual framework. This is because conventional background sections are often 'inert' and lend themselves to the development of explanations in isolation from context and "without serious reference to long historical structures and processes" (Jones, 2006, p.29). Since context and history are part of the causal explanation, and because adequate causal explanations cannot be developed in isolation from them, an historical analysis is adopted instead. The main relevant themes to be drawn out in this chapter are: the switch from subsistence farming to production for market and integration of subsistence producers on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain into a system of generalised commodity production; the role of the state in agricultural development and state regulation; and the retreat of the state in the context of market liberalisation and agricultural restructuring. At a national level, the chapter draws on secondary sources that identify these developments in rural areas and agriculture as part of the historical context or 'rural and agricultural roots' of the uprising and Revolution in Tunisia in 2010/11. It provides an overview of the recent characteristics and trends of poverty and development in northern Cap Bon and on the national and regional levels, and indicates where gender disaggregated variables point to the gendered nature of poverty in the country. The chapter discusses some of the main tensions that arose in rural areas in the prelude to the uprising and Revolution, and discusses some of the most significant and class-based farmer mobilisations, the claims grievances that were voiced, and how theses have continued and even intensified during the transition period.

The chapter draws on secondary material and some statistical data. Generally, secondary material and agriculture-related data in Tunisia is limited and difficult to come by owing to the sensitivity of the topic during the times of Bourguiba and Ben Ali.[28] Where it is used, statistical data is mostly official data from Tunisia's Ministry of Agriculture, the National Institute for Statistics and ONAGRI, the national observatory for agriculture. World Bank and FAO data has also been used in certain cases. The secondary sources drawn on have been written by researchers from Tunisia and elsewhere. In particular, I have drawn strongly on Hafedh Sethom's detailed study of Cap Bon's rural economy, conducted in the 1970s, as the

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[28] Other researchers such as Stephen J. King (2003; 2009) had their research clearance revoked by Tunisian authorities while working on the topic.

most detailed accessible study of agriculture anywhere in Tunisia. I have also drawn on his later work on the political economy of urban and rural development in Tunisia and rural marginalisation (Sethom 1992; 1996), as well as on other empirical studies by Alia Gana (2002; 2006; 2008; 2012; 2013), Mohamed Elloumi (2006; 2013; 2015), Eva Bellin (2002), Mustapha Jouili (2008; 2009) and Stephen J. King (1999; 2003; 2009).

5.1 The El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain

5.1.1 The Protectorate years

Over the course of the nineteenth century and into the first few decades of the twentieth century, the plain remained sparsely populated by bedouin groups living in simple dwellings and engaged in subsistence agriculture.[29] F. Verry described the plain in 1900 as "poor and monotone", consisting of a few "wretched" huts and a population living from cereal culture, goats and hunting (Verry, 1900, cited in Sethom, 1977a, p.219). El Haouaria, the only village on the plain in 1900, had a population of around 2,000, but it was isolated from the rest of the peninsula and the capital, and there were no basic processing amenities, such as a flour mill and an oil press (Sethom, 1977a). When Joseph Weyland passed through twenty-five years later, the village was not all that different (Sethom 1977a). According to his account, it was still small and "of hardly any interest", surrounded by "old olive trees" and comprised of "beaten earth huts, among which a few stone houses stand like palaces" (Weyland, 1926, cited in Sethom, 1977a, p.220). Because of its location at the tip of the peninsula, the plain was exposed to sands, shifting dunes and occasional strong winds, making it unfavourable to cereal culture, pastoralism and arboriculture. The French colonisers and other European farmers had little interest in the plain, choosing instead to concentrate on the areas of Cap Bon which were closer to the capital and more suitable for cereals, such as the plains of Grombalia and Bled Takelsa in the southwest (Sethom 1977a; 1977b; 1992). In these two places, colon farmers were exploiting some 40,000 ha of agricultural land as part of the Protectorate's project for bringing Tunisia's most productive lands under European ownership for the benefit of European farmers and the colonial state (Sethom 1992; Perkins, 2014). This "official colonisation" was disrupting the fabric of rural Tunisian society: rural populations, such as the bedouin tribes around Bled Takelsa, saw their lands diminish and their populations displaced as colon farmers claimed ownership over the best lands. Nationally, colonial agriculture was oriented first and foremost toward producing for export, and its effects rippled into nearby urban areas nearby urban areas, markets of which became weakened by a decline in the

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[29] Arabic does not have a word for "peasant" in English or for "paysan" in French. The language rather distinguishes between two rural groups: bedouins and fellahin. Bedouin refers to the nomadic or semi-nomadic groups who were usually pastoralists, while fellahin refers to a type of farmer or labourer who is fixed and cultivates in a particular place (Jouili, 2008). I use "peasant" here to refer to both of these.

availability of foods and by a fall in supplies of raw materials needed for weaving and leatherwork (Perkins, 2014).

Unlike other parts of Cap Bon, the northern and eastern coasts of the peninsula were mostly spared of colonial land appropriation and its direct effects. The El Haouaria-Dar Allouche
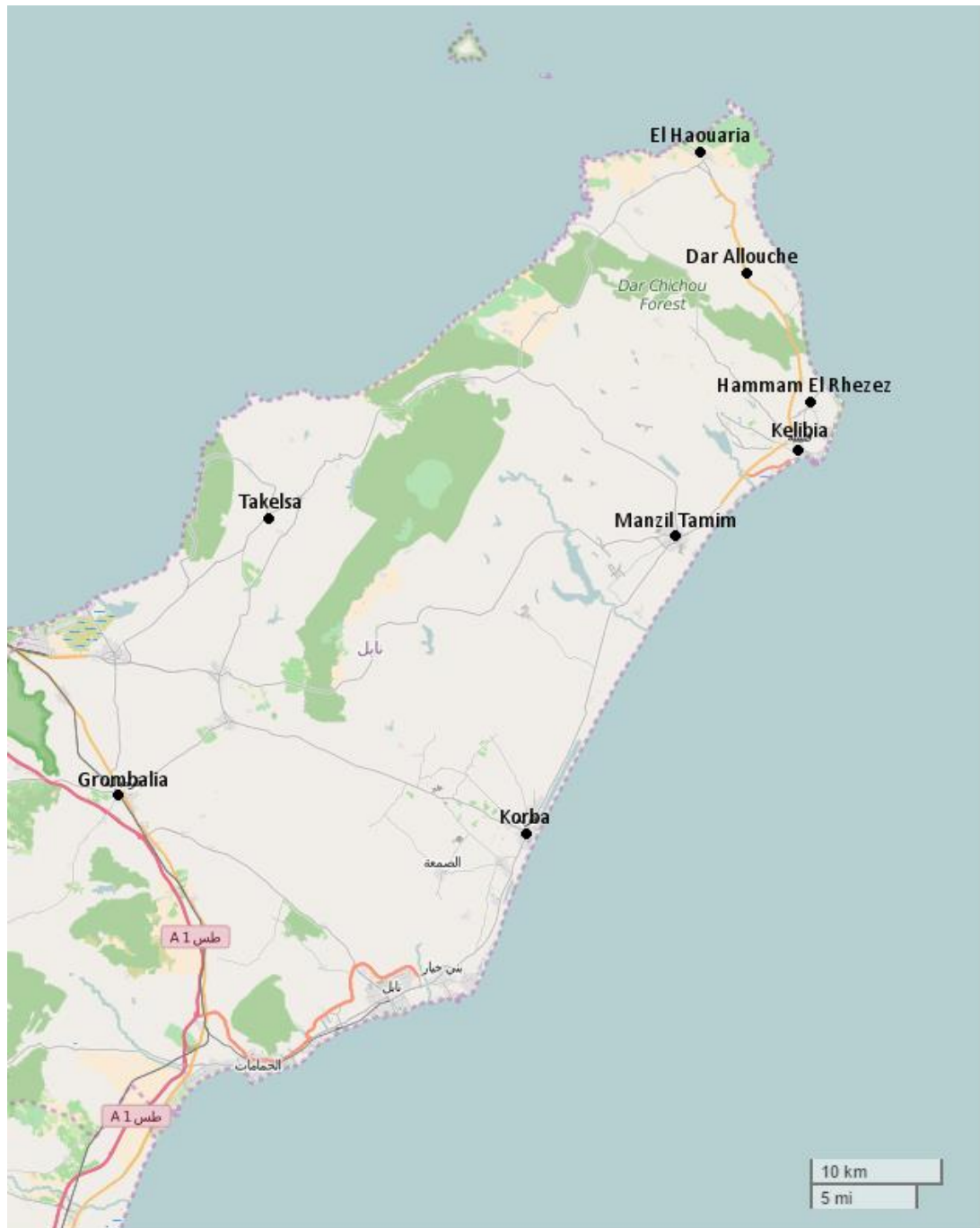
Illustration 3. Modern map of the Cap Bon peninsula. Source: OpenStreetMap and my edits.

plain saw little activity over the Protectorate years and remained rather insulated until after the Second World War. But over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the nearby towns of Kelibia and Hammam El Rhezes saw much more activity and had become relatively prosperous. Falling just outside the plain, about 25km southeast of El Haouaria,

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the area around these towns was more populated and wealthier than the plain, thanks in part to an environment that was much more favourable to cereals, pasture and garden cultures. Larger estates and small landholdings dotted on the town peripheries produced crops such as beans, chickpeas, durum wheat, barley, caraway, tomatoes, aubergines and olives for exchange in local markets (Sethom 1977b). Kelibia's economy had also benefited from an influx of Turkish migrants in the years prior to the Protectorate, and served an important commercial role because of its habour which linked it to the Sahel through Sfax and Jerba. As well as commerce, the town was important for defence. It possessed a sixteenth century fort that had been used for military purposes and for controlling the sea, and the area was relatively more secure than some of the more isolated parts of Cap Bon, such as the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain, which had been exposed to pirating over the eighteenth century and some of the nineteenth century (Sethom 1977b).

Wealthy Kelibians and inhabitants of Hammam El Rhezez exercised a large degree of control over land on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain even though they were not residing there. Most of the plain consisted of large landholdings which, much like the rest of Cap Bon, were either unproductive, used for subsistence, or were worked on by landless peasants on behalf of absentee landlords. While those living on the plain lacked ownership rights, big Kelibian landowners possessed some 1,100 ha between Kelibia and El Haouaria (Sethom 1977a). Inhabitants from Hammam El Rhezez meanwhile possessed a smaller area of 40ha around Dar Chichou. A larger proportion of the land on the plain was designated 'habous' land, a form of land endowment belonging to the Islamic community and controlled by religious leaders[30] (White, 2001). Besides the town of El Haouaria and a few small bedouin properties, the remaining two thirds of the land belonged to four large bedouin families.

5.1.2 Towards a market gardening revolution

Up until the 1930s, the northern and eastern coast of Cap Bon was characterised by the development of Kelibia and Hammam El Rhezez (Sethom 1977a). Irrigated gardening around these towns was becoming more prominent due to their growing urban populations and because of a parallel expansion in market exchange. It was only after the Second World War

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[30] In Tunisia, habous land was designated for either public or private usage. If it was public, habous income would go towards supporting public causes such as a school or hospital, but if it was private the incomes would support the heirs of the owner (White, 2001; King, 2003). Habous land was generally used for low-yielding extensive agriculture and was worked on by peasant farmers on behalf of its owners. On the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain all three habous landholdings were private and together comprised some 2,070 ha (Sethom 1977a). Habous was also highly political: under the Ottoman Empire, the Beys in Tunisia would often legitimise their power by taking peasant lands and converting them into habous "dedicated to maraboutic lineage…or a pious project" (King, 2001, p.56). Later on, under the French Protectorate, public habous was acquired and given to European farmers, though private habous remained largely intact. Habous lands were dissolved following Independence in 1956 and freed up for intensification.

that the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain began to undergo any substantial change as part of a much larger "market gardening revolution" that was starting to unfold along the northern and eastern coast of the peninsula, from Korba in the east up to El Haouaria in the north. Beginning in the late 1940s, this revolution saw peasant farmers in the regions switch from extensive farming to intensive irrigated agriculture that was becoming integrated with domestic markets.[31] It was encouraged by renewed urbanisation across Tunisia, by the expanding middle class and rising urban consumption which generated market demand, and by the development of roads which allowed goods to be transported across larger distances. Very quickly, the plain began shifting from an economy based on subsistence to one based on market exchange.

These initial developments on the plain were spearheaded by inhabitants from Kelibia and Hammam El Rhezez who owned property there and who could afford to make the requisite purchases and investments for irrigated farming. Property tax figures analysed by Sethom (1977b) show that gardening cultures on the plain went from some 182 ha in 1942, to 500 ha in 1949, before reaching 1,500 ha in 1961. Sharecroppers working on behalf of landowners and bedouin groups in Kelibia and Hammam El Rhezez were sent to work on the distant plain, bringing with them knowledge of irrigated gardening techniques which the pastoral and cereal growing populations already living there also began to emulate (Sethom 1977b). Landowners based in the towns began expanding their enterprises by buying more land at low prices from bedouin groups, eventually gaining ownership rights over 2,100 ha or about a quarter of all agricultural land there.

5.2   Independence and the developmental state

Chili pepper was the key crop in the initial years of this market gardening revolution. Korba, Kelibia and El Haouaria witnessed a "very remarkable" production growth in the crop during late 1940s and early 1950s which responded to market demand for fresh green and sundried red (Sethom, 1977a, p.404). The development was even more pronounced in the areas around Korba and Menzel Tamim (Illustration 3), which went from rather modest chili pepper production in 1942 to become the largest market gardening region on the peninsula by 1961. Market gardening really began to take off after Independence in 1956 however, which saw the production of older irrigated cultures undergo "unprecedented growth" and new cultures such as tomatoes and peanuts introduced in response to growing market demand.

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[31] Market gardening, or 'maraîchage' in French, is a particular type of intensive agriculture based on short production cycles. It is practiced on small areas of land, is irrigated, highly labour intensive and depends on little mechanisation.

This picture on the northern and eastern coasts was made possible by the intervention of the new independent state which began actively intervening to support farming. Among the many legacies left behind in Tunisia by the French Protectorate had been the presence of an 'agrarian dual economy' comprised of a small mechanised sector alongside a large subsistence sector made up of peasant farmers. When the Neo-Dustur party under Habib Bourguiba took over from the French in 1956, it committed to a programme of 'national development' in which 'agricultural modernisation' was a critical element. Modernisation of agriculture for the planners meant generating employment, and intensifying production and increasing productivity through improvements to the technical conditions for farming. Private sector forces were initially intended to lead this, but its slowness gave way to a more state-centred mode of national development. Like many other post-colonial states, these goals were subordinated to what was considered the more important objective of industrialisation, leading agriculture to be positioned as a mechanism for driving the development and growth of the country's urban economic sectors (Sethom 1992).

On the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain, state intervention in support of agricultural modernisation consisted of a number of things. First, it dissolved the large habous landholdings on the plain as part of a broader land reform programme implemented across the country. Tunisia's new leaders, many of whom were linked to Cap Bon's agrarian bourgeoisie, viewed these landholdings as archaic and as an obstacle to agricultural intensification and development. The attempt to dissolve them meant getting rid of their absentee landlords and freeing up the land for and releasing it to the market for peasants, tenants and property owners in the towns who wanted to turn it to productive use (Elloumi, 2006). While they were dissolved on the plain and a lot of the land was freed up, some of the original landowners retained control over portions of their property however with the result that large landholdings persisted there.

State intervention in support of agricultural modernisation also took the form of incentives for the installation of industries in the northern and coastal regions for processing the agricultural products produced there (Bellin, 2002). These incentives were passed to private actors and traders based in the cities. One of the rationales for supporting industries lay in the problem that Tunisia's dependence on foreign food imports, such as tomato concentrate, risked damaging the country's balance of payments. Twenty-four canneries were set up across the northern and coastal regions by the early 1960s which catered to tomatoes, chili peppers and other legumes, and Tunisia very quickly turned into an exporter of these products (Sethom 1977b). On the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain, chili peppers continued to be the main crop, but state stimulation of industry gave the initial impetus that would later propel the tomato culture into second place on the plain. Agriculture on the plain, as elsewhere in Cap Bon,

assumed an increasingly industrial character. On the national level, public participation in gross fixed capital formation reached 72% in agro-alimentary industries between 1961-1969 (Bellin, 2002).

Third, the state supported agriculture by providing direct and indirect support to farmers. Tenant farmers and smallholders were given access to state credit, and it made available at reduced prices or free of charge various types of farming equipment and inputs, such as motor pumps and fertilisers. Medium term credit for larger investments, such as for digging wells and buying motor pumps, was provided by the National Bank of Tunisia (BNT) while special credit unions set up after 1964 provided short term seasonal credit with low interest rates for purchasing farming inputs (Sethom 1977b). These credit unions were part of the agricultural service cooperatives which were a set of state managed enterprises set up across Tunisia for bringing together local farmers and their lands to "rationalise" agricultural production (Perkins, 2014). Initially, inputs were obtained on the plain through agricultural service cooperatives based in Kelibia, Menzel Temime and Korba, but the setting up of local sales centres in places like Dar Allouche meant farmers no longer needed to travel long distances to acquire them (Sethom 1977b). Though the cooperatives project was abandoned some years later in 1969, Sethom (1977b, p.184) notes that the spread of the service cooperatives and credit unions "had very significant effects on the growth of gardening cultures" on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain. A boom in the tomato culture, which was of large benefit to small and medium farmers, was made possible by "the distribution of fertilisers and treatments, sold by the cooperative centres in the remotest corners of the peninsular and bought largely thanks to credit given by the credit unions to the majority of farmers" (Sethom, 1977b, p.184).

5.2.1 Sharecropping and family labour

The market gardening revolution saw the consolidation of small and medium farms on the plain which drew primarily on family labour and occasional seasonal labour (Sethom 1977b). Salaried rural labour, whose expansion in other regions of the peninsula had led to the development of a salaried rural class, was less common in the northern and eastern regions. This was due to the type of agriculture and crops that were suited to growing on the plain, but also because the French had made little impact on the land structure and because the populations there had not been turned into agricultural labourers by land expropriation. The prevalence of larger landholdings on the plain owned by absentee landlords and which were distant from urban centres meant that sharecropping remained a common agricultural system there (Sethom, 1977a; 1977b; 1992). This form of tenant farming was a necessity for absentee landlords who were unable to regularly supervise the labour of their subordinates. Unlike salaried labour, it incentivised tenants to work by having them take on a share of the risks and some of the dangers of a poor harvest. When Sethom (1977b) conducted his study in the mid-

1970s, between 40 and 50% of gardening land in these regions was being worked on through sharecropping arrangements which were mobilising more than half of all farmers in the regions.[32]

Because of its nature, market gardening requires a large amount of manual labour and relatively little in the way of agricultural machinery. After Independence and especially over the course of the 1960s, farming across the country underwent a rather profound process of mechanisation which was almost non-existent among the small and fragmented market gardening cultures such as in the north and eastern coasts of Cap Bon (Sethom, 1992). There was little need in the gardening regions for the tractors and combine harvesters for example which were being used for cereals and legumes in the north of Tunisia and elsewhere. The emphasis remained firmly on labour, with probably the most significant technological changes including the uptake of motor pumps for irrigation and the switch from the wooden plough to the steel-tip, which nevertheless continued to rely on draft animals. As the state encouraged mechanisation through subsidies and the provision of loans, the benefits accrued mainly to large farmers and townsfolk who would rent the machines out to small and medium farmers and tenants, perhaps for an afternoon or a day at a time. This became possible after 1969 with the appearance of service gaps created by abandonment of the cooperative project and economic liberalisation. Sethom (1992) observes that as well as state incentives, large farmers were encouraged to obtain machines and rent them out to unmechanised farmers as another source of income, since low prices for key agricultural products (see below) kept the profitability of working on the land at a low level. If machines were rented in the market gardening regions they were used for other types of crop, such as cereals, or they were used for preparing the land for garden cultures at the start of the season.

The tenant farmers who had been part of the market gardening revolution in the late 40s, 50s and 60s were usually bedouins or landless labourers that had managed to move out of older khammesat system, but who lacked land, machines and draft animals for intensive farming.[33]

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[32] In Tunisia as a whole however, official data indicates that sharecropping was not particularly common in the post-Independence years. The most common form of farming system was direct owner-occupation (81.5% of cultivated land in 1961-1962) which drew on primarily family labour and mostly occupied areas of less than 5 ha. Only about 11% of land was sharecropped in 1961-1962, and this had reduced to 3% by 2004-2005 (Appendix 4b). Scholars note that since Independence the size of agrarian structures and the way they are farmed in Tunisia has remained more or less consistent (Sethom, 1992; 1996; Elloumi, 2006).

[33] This khammesat ("fifths") system had been a common feudal structure in North African societies in which the landless peasant farmer was paid a fifth of the harvest in exchange for their labour. The remaining parts (draft, seeds, water and land) was provided by the landowner. The system was formally codified in 1874 in the context of increasing commercialisation and export of grain as an attempt to bind the peasant to the landowner: "*The khammas could abandon his estate only if he became an independent farmer working on his own account. If he lacked the tools and other resources to make it on his own, the qa'id* [a regional representative of the state based in major towns]

The khammesat system had been more prevalent in the grain growing regions of Cap Bon (and Tunisia more generally) during the period of the Protectorate, but Sethom (1977b) notes that increasing land fragmentation and growing mechanisation had the effect of reducing livelihood opportunities for khammas in these areas, pushing them away and toward opportunities offered elsewhere on the plains and coastal areas. Later on, Tunisia's new leaders brought pressure to bear on landowners to do away with the khammesat system in favour of sharecropping and salaried labour, which they considered more modern and less archaic (Sethom 1977b).

On the plain, two types of tenure arrangement became common in the context of the market gardening revolution. The first was an owner-occupation contract referred to as *mgharsa* whereby the land was entrusted to a landless farmer for a period of about 10-15 years. Through this arrangement the landowner would periodically receive some of the profit. The other was a shorter term sharecropping arrangement based on a verbal agreement between tenant and landowner which was reviewed annually. Sharecroppers were typically responsible for providing the labour, which meant household labour directed by the male, and they sometimes contributed a share of the productive resources. When the product was harvested and sold, the landowner would share the income with the tenant and his family, but the way this was shared depended on the agreement. Tenants who already owned animals or agricultural equipment were in a better position to negotiate for improved terms to the tenancy arrangement. These wealthier tenants, referred to as *chatter*, could leverage their existing assets to push for a greater share of the income. In contrast, poorer tenants with only their labour to offer would receive only about 37% of the income since the equipment and draft animals provided by the landowner were counted as a quarter of the income (Sethom, 1977b). These poorer tenants, referred to as *gawaam*, existed primarily on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain.

While sharecropping tenants may have had fewer assets at their disposal, they were not necessarily poorer than some of the small landowning farmers in terms of incomes. Tenants were required to share the earnings with the landowner, but they could obtain higher incomes than some of the smallholders because they had larger areas of land at their disposal (Sethom 1977b). In the context of production for the commercial economy, tenant farmers could also eventually become smallholders if they were able to accumulate enough to buy a plot of land, which some of them did.

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was obliged to renew his contract with the farmer. Bodily force could be used against all khamamisa not fulfilling their obligations" (King, 2003, p.62; also Hamzaoui, 1979).

5.3   The decline of developmentalism

5.3.1   Abandoning the cooperatives

State intervention in support of agriculture on the plain probably reached its climax in the late 1960s before heading into a long and protracted decline. In September 1969, the state abandoned the cooperative experiment following widespread opposition from a number of quarters. Large farmers and traders had become increasingly bitter over the years because of the narrowing of rent-generating opportunities caused by the state's growing monopolisation and centralisation of agriculture services and production. Tensions had been building up over recent years, with processors in the market gardening regions sabotaging tomato collection and causing crop losses (Sethom 1977b). They had also refused to pay the service cooperatives what was owed for the harvests, claiming problems of overproduction, poor sales and lack of funds. Farmers who depended on the cooperatives were, as a result, unable to receive their earnings (Sethom, 1977b, p.184). When the government proposed collectivising all production at the start of 1969, a "furious reaction" (Perkins, 2014, p.155) ensued which saw "thousands of large landholders us[ing] their considerable influence at the highest levels of the PSD to protest against the application of Neo-Dustur socialism to their property".

On the other side, poorer farmers had also begun to resent corrupt government managers and state taxes applied to their production, and they feared the proposed production cooperatives would reduce them to salaried labourers. Resentment was also confounded by the fact that state reorganisation of agriculture had occurred over a particularly dry period which had seen a reduction in the water table and poor harvests. When a number of production cooperatives were rolled out after March 1969 around Korba and Menzel Bou Zelfa, farmers responded with sabotage. Opposition to the production cooperatives widened and became directed to all cooperatives in general, including the service cooperatives, leading eventually to the abandonment of the cooperative project in September of that year.

5.3.2   Economic liberalisation

The abandonment of the cooperative project meant a reduction of state intervention in agriculture in Tunisia. It also marked a broader turn toward economic liberalisation across all sectors, and a repositioning of the country's economy into the international division of labour based on low salaries (King, 2003; Elloumi, 2006; Bellin, 2002).[34] Agriculture lost its special

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[34] Bellin (2002, p.23) describes the country's "return to liberalism" in 1970s as having come from a failure of the state's import substituting strategy for national development. Its difficulties lay in the following: that the domestic market remained limited and that there was therefore limited room for industrial growth; that the country's level of imports did not reduce, meaning that its balance of trade deficit persisted; and that its small tax base alongside its far-reaching development plans meant the government was facing fiscal crisis. To deal with these, the Tunisian state committed to developing the private sector instead which would involve "a wide variety of measures favourable to industrial investment, ensuring extensive institutional support to the private sector, generous subsidies for credit

status over the course of the 1970s as investment in the sector declined and the economy reoriented more strongly in favour of industrial growth, tourism and the development of urban areas. In the market gardening regions of Cap Bon, the service cooperatives and credit unions began shutting down, and those that remained saw their activities reduced. The monopolies held by the service cooperatives were lifted after 1969 and private sector forces were left to fill the gaps, notably in input and credit provision and marketing channels. Sethom (1977b, p.186) notes that this withdrawal of the state meant poor farmers "fell under the thumb" of private traders, shop keepers and lenders (Sethom, 1977b, p.186) whose speculative and usurious behaviour they resented. Farmers began bemoaning the problems accessing credit and land as factors which underpinned "the proletarianisation and exodus of a good part of the landless and small farmers" on the peninsula (Sethom, 1977b, p.187).

For poorer farmers, the period of economic liberalisation in the 1970s was characterised by the decline of access to credit. The unions which had supplied credit over the course of 1960s began to wane during the 1970s, drawing up large deficits due to farmer non-repayments. By the end of the decade the amount of unpaid debt had reached a record of some TND 2,650,000 (Sethom 1992). The new credit organisations set up in the early 1970s as alternatives to existing credit unions had also had limited reach: nationwide, only about 20% of farmers benefited from it due in large part to long and complicated application procedures and because of a high rate of non-reimbursement and bank mistrust (Sethom, 1992). In the market gardening regions, the high costs of irrigated agriculture meant that any seasonal credit would cover only between 10-20% of expenses anyway, though farmers there did benefit later on from state subsidies on imported agricultural inputs which were intended to offset the negative effects on cereal culture of a strong US dollar and a devaluation of the Tunisian dinar in 1986 (Jouili, 2008; Sethom 1977b).

While state intervention in agriculture diminished, it nevertheless remained relevant. Public and private investment declined but rural development policy had some favourable elements such as the managing of imports in a way that protected domestic production (Elloumi, 2006). The state also continued to stimulate domestic and foreign investment in industry with the introduction in 1972 and 1974 of two new investment codes that would offer generous fiscal incentives for would-be investors (Bellin, 2002). Agriculture industries were set up in the market gardening regions of Cap Bon and elsewhere, and a growing number of urban-based private traders began to gain control over and profit from the flow of agriculture goods and commerce (Sethom 1992). On the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain, there new factories were

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and inputs, highly protected markets, and professional training for private sector entrepreneurs" (Bellin, 2002, p.24).

established in the early to mid-1970s for processing tomatoes and chili peppers, joining Saheb El Jebel's existing factory which had been around since 1961.

To some extent, farmers on the plain could enjoy more favourable terms of production and exchange than farmers growing different cultures elsewhere. They could benefit from direct state support, subsidies on production and consumption, and a strong domestic market for their produce, but unlike other farmers they enjoyed relatively liberalised prices on their gardening crops. In the post-Independence years, and especially after the 1960s, the state had retained the practice of fixing certain agricultural consumer products at artificially low prices in keeping with its economic goals of developing the country's urban economic sectors and maintaining urban salaries at a low level (Sethom, 1992; 1996; Gana 2012). The situation was problematic for those who farmed these particular agricultural commodities - cereals, oils, milk, sugar beet and meats, all considered essentials for the urban poor and middle class - since price administration meant a transfer of value from rural producers to urban consumers.[35]

5.3.3 Agricultural restructuring

Liberalisation of agriculture intensified further still through processes of agricultural restructuring that began with the signing of an Agricultural Structural Adjustment Plan in 1987 and through into the 1990s and 2000s with Tunisia's accession to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), later the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and the European Union (Elloumi, 2006; Harrigan, 2014; AfDB, 2012a). This agricultural restructuring is generally a process in motion, beginning in the 1980s and continuing to the present, most recently with renewed negotiations in 2015 and 2016 between Tunisia and the European Union over the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement. When agricultural restructuring began in the 1980s, it was markedly different to the liberalisation of the previous decade. Hinging on "new forms of integration into the global economy", restructuring "implied a new role for the agricultural sector, conforming to the requirements of the emerging global food system" (Gana, 2012, p.205). It affected deeper commoditisation of agricultural production, favoured large-scale agriculture and cash crops to the detriment of small farmers, and it led to the emergence of new social-economic actors exercising control over rural production, such as agricultural entrepreneurs, industrialists, bankers, machine owners and traders (Gana, 2002; 2008; 2012; King 1999; 2003). Restructuring implied a role for the state in organising its own withdrawal from the sector, for fostering a more positive business environment, and for elaborating frameworks and mechanisms to support and regulate enterprises and to coordinate

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[35] Sethom (1996) refers to this as a subsidy paid by poor farmers for the benefit of urban-based industry and consumers. He views this historic price fixing in Tunisia as one of the key mechanisms that marginalised Tunisian agriculture, generating rural unemployment and underemployment, poverty, rural exodus and which led to regional inequalities and the proliferation of urban slums.

sectoral actors (Dahou et al., 2013; Hibou, 2011). According to a Ministry of Agriculture report in 1997,

> *One of the best forms of state support for agriculture is for it to reduce its interference in the decision-making process of the agricultural entrepreneur and its selective and differentiated intervention in determining the factors which orient those decisions (price, land rent, salary etc.). Ultimately, free, dynamic and well-regulated markets can ensure greater progress for general social welfare than a policy of supervision and taxation of prices* […] *The producer and guardian state will give way to a regulating state, guaranteeing the general interest, the smooth functioning of markets, and stable revenues* (Ministry of Agriculture, cited in Jouili, 2008, p.249).

Agricultural restructuring was a component in a larger programme of structural reform at the time. In the early 1980s the IMF and the World Bank had begun warning Tunisian officials of the dangers of the country's growing deficit and the pressures being exerted by external debts (Perkins, 2014; Dillman, 1998). Exports were falling over the first half of the decade and the debt service ratio rose significantly, reaching 50 percent of GDP by 1986. The prescription from the IFIs was trade liberalisation and a devaluation of the currency, privatisation of state assets, the deregulation of economic sectors to stimulate the private sector, state encouragement of good investments, and a reduction of public expenditures, in particular by abandoning subsidies. (Perkins, 2014). Restructuring aimed to weaken the domestic market, as internal demand was outpacing GDP growth and fuelling the country's growing imbalances. In the early 1980s, the government of Tunisia had tried to reduce the subsidy burden on public finances by reducing consumption subsidies on bread and other basic food commodities, but it led to two weeks of demonstrations in the cities which saw them quickly restored. The progressive lifting of subsidies on consumer products was attempted again through restructuring for the purposes of compressing internal demand, according to Jouili (2008), but with new arguments about how the General Compensation Fund (GCF) which manages food subsidies [36] was benefitting the rich more than the poor, and which was leading to overconsumption and waste. The policy of agricultural prices was integrated into a reorientation of the economy toward "a regime of accumulation driven by exports based on increased mobilisation of static comparative advantage and market regulation" (Bedoui, 2004, cited in Jouili, 2008, p.190): subsidy elimination would rationalise resources and improve farmers' incomes, while the alignment of domestic prices to world prices would orient production according to this notion of comparative advantage. An implementation plan was

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[36] The General Compensation Fund (Caisse Générale de Compensation), created in 1945, is state funded and intervenes to stabilise fluctuating prices for basic consumer commodities such as grains and milk.

drawn up by the Tunisian government and the IMF and the World Bank made available $800 million for it.

For agriculture, the aim was to incorporate Tunisian farming more thoroughly into the global economy. Generally, the features of the Structural Adjustment Plan were similar to those implemented in other parts of the Arab world such as Egypt. In agriculture it aimed to increase production, reduce dependence on foreign food imports, and improve rural employment and intersectoral income inequalities. Its interventions consisted of a reduction of state intervention in various spheres in favour of the private sector and a liberalisation of input and output prices. Subsidies on inputs were progressively lifted and the credit sector was reorganised, with subsidised rates eliminated in favour of investment subsidies for small and middle farmers for irrigation equipment and soil and water conservation (Elloumi, 2006). Marketing and supply channels were privatised and remaining agricultural cooperatives were passed to the private sector. Trade liberalisation continued with the signing of GATT and agreements with the European Union which injected some competition into Tunisia's domestic market. Though a number of scholars have argued that the 'agrarian roots' of Tunisia's Revolution in 2011 lay in this restructuring and its consequences for rural poverty and inequality (Gana, 2012; 2013; Elloumi, 2013; Lahmar, 2015), agricultural policy remains largely unchanged since the Revolution (also section 5.5.3 below). As Ayeb and Bush (2016) maintain in respect to both Tunisia and Egypt,

> *there has been no attempt to recast agricultural policy in either Egypt or Tunisia. The neoliberal narrative continues to justify the dislocation and hardship in the countryside on the grounds that the best way to boost agricultural exports is to cater to the prerogatives of landowners and investors which, for too long, had been subordinated to the interests of tenants paying less than market rates for land use. Small farmer interests are shunted aside in the rush in both countries to secure the neoliberal status quo.*

Inputs and subsidies

The aim of subsidy reform on agricultural inputs was to establish 'true' prices for these inputs, and to 'rationalise' the use of these resources by farmers. To do this, authorities began with the progressive lifting of subsidies on agricultural inputs and equipment alongside tax relief, with the long term aim of eliminating subsidies completely (Jouili, 2008). Beginning in 1992, the prices of fertilisers, livestock feed, seeds and plant treatments became more expensive as they aligned to world prices. In respect to their distribution, the government began to withdraw state distribution services in favour of facilitating the growth of private sector suppliers. It

lifted resale margins for agricultural inputs after 1987 and through another investment code sought to stimulate the growth of businesses oriented toward input distribution.

The effects of subsidy reform and alignment to world prices have been subject to analyses which reveal little benefit for all but a few farmers (Jouili, 2008; 2009; Elloumi and Dhehibi, 2012; World Bank, 1995). Jouili's (2008) study of the effects of restructuring, perhaps the most detailed of its kind, finds that the changes in prices has been far from favourable to farmers, and it has not led to improvements in rural incomes. Jouili's (2008) study involves analyses of changes in real and nominal producer prices of key agricultural crops – including cereals and gardening cultures – and changes to prices of certain inputs, such as fertilisers and seeds. The World Bank, an advocate of the lifting of input subsidies, has laid blame on the persistence of price administration[37] by the state:

> *Price increases for major agricultural commodities have over the past 15 years been kept below the inflation rate. The system allows providing the urban majority (two thirds of the population) with relatively cheap food. However, these policies also lead to low incentives for farmers to invest, increase production, or improve quality, which result in lower farm incomes* (World Bank, 2012, p.9).

On the plain, production of irrigated cultures became more costly: agricultural inputs were suddenly more expensive[38] while the need to align output prices with global prices meant that the minimum price guarantees, which tended to be higher than global prices, remained static (Elloumi, 2006). Jouili's review of data from the Ministry of Agriculture indicates that output prices for the main gardening crops, such as tomatoes, chili peppers and potatoes in fact declined in real terms between 1985 and 2005. Further, deregulation and the relaxation of price controls generated other problems for farmers, notably uncertainties over product marketing and the persistence of conflictual relations between farmers and processors (Ayeb, 2012; Elloumi, 2006; Gana, 2012; 2013). As we will see in subsequent chapters, farmers on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain identified the 1990s as the decade when they began to experience problems in agriculture.

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[37] In spite of the neoliberal character of this restructuring, the state has retained a range of policy interventions for the sector (Harrigan, 2014; AfDB, 2012a). Price administration continues for a number of agricultural commodities, such as cereals and milk, and prices are usually set at a higher level than world prices. Another mechanism mainly used for sugar beet and tobacco involves state intervention in the market via a public storage body: in the event of a surplus, the state buys up a certain amount of stock to generate more demand; or contrariwise, when there is surplus demand it sells a part of its stock with the price on the market kept at a fixed level (AfDB, 2012a; Harrigan, 2014). Agriculture also remains protected by a range of tariffs and quotas, and the GCF continues to intervene in subsidising key products such as cereals, oils, sugar and milk to protect consumers from higher costs – for perhaps political reasons above all (Harrigan, 2014).

[38] Elloumi (2006) notes that the amount of chemical fertilizers used per hectare for garden cultures initially rose between 1980 and 1985, but underwent a decline from 400kg in 1985 to just 200kg in 1996.

Investment and access to finance

The period of agricultural restructuring has also been characterised by the stagnation of investment in agriculture (Table 4) and limited access for farmers to agricultural finance. Both are requirements when farming is market- rather than subsistence-oriented, and they are prerequisites for agricultural intensification and modernisation of agricultural practices. At the same time, the contribution of agriculture to the country's economy has continued to decline as a share of GDP, while the trend for contributions of industry and services has been to rise (Figure 7).

Sectors	VII Plan 1987-1991		VIII Plan 1992-1996		IX Plan 1997-2001		X Plan 2002-2006		XI Plan 2007-2009	
	Amount	%	Amount	%	Amount	%	Amount	%	Amount	%
Agriculture	1,719.8	15	2,778.6	14	4,241.1	13	4,169.1	10	2,786.3	7.5
Industry	3,413.1	30	5,914.1	29	8,626	27	11,009.8	27	13,030.4	35
Services	6,068.4	54	11,869	58	18,720.9	59	26,053.7	63	21,452.1	57.6
Total	11,201.3	100	20,561.7	100	31,587.9	100	41,232.7	100	37,268.9	100

Table 4. Investment in agriculture, industry and services sectors between the VII and XI Plans. Source: FAO (2013a).

When agricultural restructuring began in the 1980s, the state sought to reorganise the agriculture banks, stimulate investment and improve access to formal credit for small farmers excluded from regular funding (Jouili, 2009). The National Bank for Agricultural Development was merged with the Tunisian National Bank to form the National Agriculture Bank (BNA) in 1989, and a Code for Encouraging Investment was introduced in order to ease lending. Limited state investment in agriculture, modest lending from banks, and deteriorating access to finance however meant small farmers became increasingly dependent on their "own resources", which likely includes a "significant volume of [informal] supplier and purchaser credit" (World Bank, 2012, p.1). Access to formal finance declined according to Ministry of Agriculture figures, from 9.3% between 1990-1994 to 6.3% between 1999 and 2004 (Jouili, 2009; 2008). More recently, a study by the World Bank (2012) finds that only about 7 percent of farmers benefit from formal agricultural finance, and that these make up just 11% of investment, with the remaining investment made up from farmers' "own resources." This picture is broadly reflective a global trend since the 1980s for a shift from state credit towards 'financial market' approaches (Gerber, 2014). The same report continues to note that of the seasonal credit given, for which the BNA is the only real accessible provider for small farmers, is almost completely limited to cereal production, and that other crops have not received seasonal loans since at least 2004. In addition, the report notes that the banks in Tunisia have strategically moved away from lending to smallholders in favour of large-scale farms: "commercial banks are prepared to serve their well-known clients, whether in agriculture or other sectors, but do not have any culture or tradition of serving smallholders." As we will see in subsequent chapters, this has left farmers on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain dependent

on private sector suppliers who provide agricultural inputs on the basis of informal credit and high rates of interest.

The commodification of agriculture

The deepening commodification of agriculture that these processes of liberalisation and restructuring entail has seen expansion of the trade in inputs such as seeds, chemical fertilisers, pesticides and treatments, and the appearance of new equipment, varieties and products. State incentives to traders encouraged the growth of trade in imported hybrid seeds, and farmers everywhere were encouraged to switch from Tunisian seeds to these high-yielding varieties. In 1975, the first piece of legislation permitting the use of specific hybrid varieties was drawn up, and since 1985 an Official Catalogue of Plant Varieties ('*catalogue officiel des variétés*
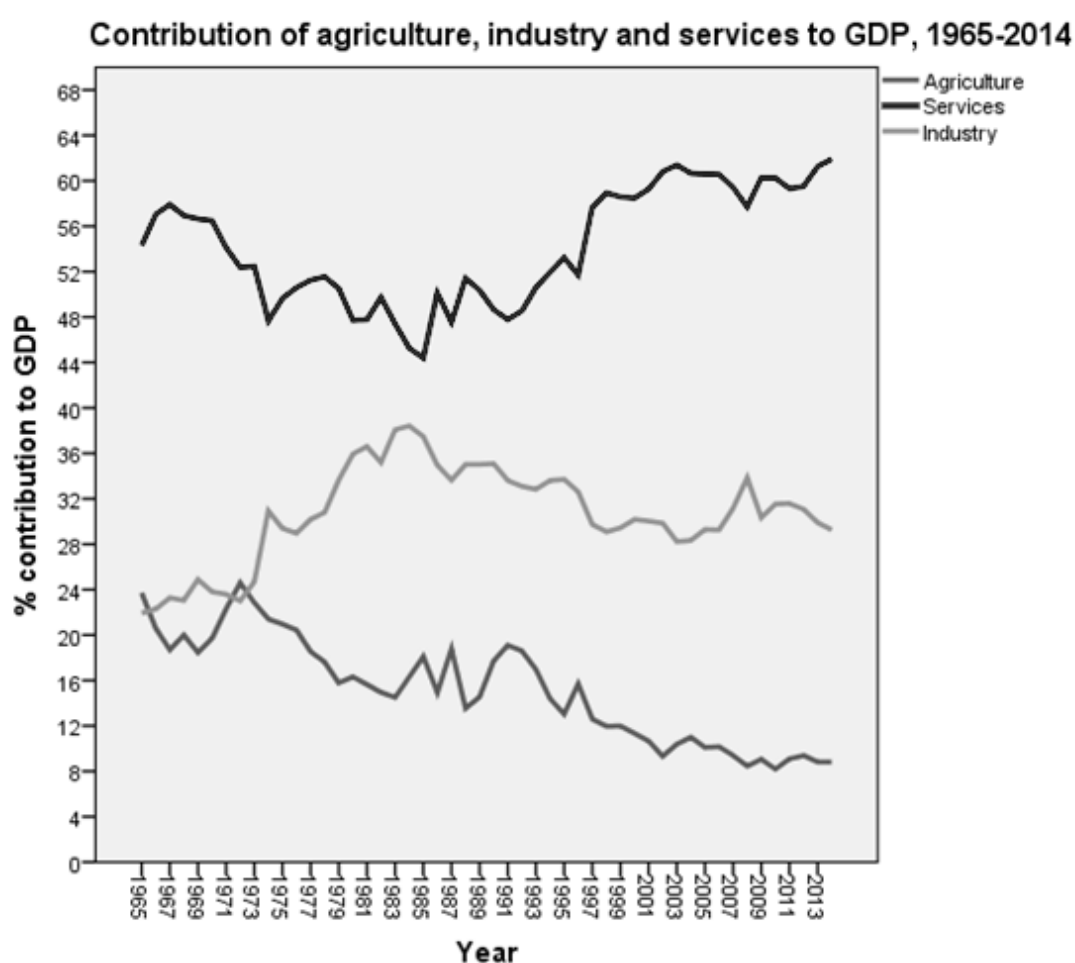
Figure 7. Contribution of agriculture, industry and services to GDP, 1965-2014. Source: World Bank (2016b).

végétales') has listed permitted seeds. [39] According to the Association for Sustainable Development, the use of indigenous seeds has declined over the decades, while imported hybrid seed use has gone from 35% in 1975 to 58% in 1994 to 75% in 2004 (Nawaat, 2015). Processors have also switched to distributing and processing hybrid varieties for reasons having to do with production and marketing. According to one study of the tomato commodity chain in the gardening regions of Cap Bon, processors have switched to imported hybrid seeds for reasons which include pH, post-harvest conservation and aptitude for processing [40] (Champion, 2014). The trade has also expanded to include new types of imported pesticides and other treatments that work with these hybrid seeds, as well as productivity enhancing equipment such as drip irrigation.

Agricultural services

The withdrawal of the state in the context of liberalisation and restructuring was accompanied by an emphasis on the role of private associations, Agricultural Development Groups (GDA)[41] and 'interprofessional groups'[42] to fill the gaps left by the Tunisian state's withdrawal from resource management, administration of production, product marketing, research, and extension and training. These are private associations in principle but remain closely tied to the apparatus of the state and are dependent on state funding, representing a public-private venture that in practice allows for the "private management of public goods" (Canesse, 2014, p.102). In respect to their implications for agriculture services, Jouili's (2008, p.254) study finds that "the continuity of services previously offered by the administration, is barely provided for by professional organizations and private operators." Studies and reports have generally found that very few small and medium farmers are benefiting from agricultural services, while the extension and producer organisations and collective interest groups for these farmers are poorly resourced and participation low. As we will see in subsequent chapters, this is echoed in the sentiments of farmers on the plain, who have seen the

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[39] A cursory reading of the catalogue reveals seed varieties belonging to large agro-chemical and seed multinationals such as Monsanto and Syngenta, as well as a number of smaller European and non-European seed corporations. There are also a number of Tunisian research centres that develop hybrid varieties.

[40] Seeds that produce varieties with a pH lower than 4.6 are preferred because it avoids the need for sterilisation prior to canning.

[41] GDAs are user associations for the management of natural resources such as forests, pasture and water.

[42] Interprofessional approaches have their roots in France but spread to other parts of the Francophone world. They prioritise the creation of private associations that bring together different actors from different stages of the same commodity chain ('*filière*') with the objectives of "elaborating policies, guaranteeing equity among the members, facilitating the improvement of the performance of the chain and defending the interests of the members" (FAO, 2009, p.5; also Bernstein, 1996). In Tunisia, interprofessional groups have a number of roles which include managing linkages between different parts of the commodity chain, facilitating the dialogue between professional groups and the administration, and participating in export promotion.

withdrawal of state benefits and services over the years, and feel that there is nowhere to turn to for help and support.

5.4 The plain today

5.4.1 Industrialised agriculture

The market gardening revolution transformed traditional farming practices toward agro-industrial activities. Agriculture on the plain is partly mechanised and consists of predictable and fast maturing yields, and dependent on chemical fertilisers, pesticides and modern seed varieties. Production is integrated into commodity chains that provision agri-food processors and national supermarkets, and some foreign buyers as well. The industrial organisation of production on the plain makes it markedly different to less commodified (or 'less modern') agricultural systems, and to 'agroecology' and 'diversified farming systems' that are oriented toward sustainable technologies and practices, biodiversity, and more direct relations with consumers (Kremen et al., 2012). On the plain, tomatoes, chili peppers, potatoes and peanuts are grown in the main, and other less commonly planted crops include caraway, carrots, cabbages, barley and for the larger farmers some arboriculture and citrus fruit.[43] Tomato prices are fixed through production contracts with tomato processors and a 'reference price', while pepper, peanuts, potato and vegetable prices are in principle free. Fresh and processed cultures serve the domestic market first and foremost, though the Libyan market is an important destination for processed tomatoes, consuming around 80% of Tunisia's double tomato concentrate exports (GICA, 2014). Across Tunisia as a whole, gardening cultures cover only a small fraction of cultivated land (3%) but it makes up 16% of agricultural production (Khamassi et al., 2016).

Culture	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Tomato						▓	▓	▓				
Peanut					▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	
Chili Pepper						▓	▓	▓	▓	▓		
Potato (off-season)	▓	▓									▓	▓
Potato (spring)		▓	▓	▓								
Potato (seasonal)					▓	▓						

Table 5. Seasonal cultures on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain. Fieldwork took place between September 2015 and January 2016.

As illustrated in Table 5, the tomato season runs from June to August, while peanuts are planted in May and are dried in the sun and threshed between October and November. Off-season potatoes and winter vegetables begin in November and run into the first several months

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[43] Trees and citrus fruit are rarely an option for cash-starved farmers because it takes several years before these begin bearing fruit.

of the following year. The spring potato season runs from March until May, and the seasonal potato lasts from May until July. The chlli pepper season runs from June to October. The March-April period is one of the more difficult periods for farmers, a time when household access to cash is lower and when farmers need to acquire the resources for growing tomatoes, peppers and peanuts. Once tomatoes and chili peppers are harvested they are either sold to private traders[44] or are taken for processing to one of the factories on the plain where they are turned into tomato concentrate and chili paste ('harissa'). Potatoes are delivered to local centres for cooling and storage, while peanuts, which are easily stored, are sold directly to private traders. A weekly farmer's market takes place along the main road in Dar Allouche every Tuesday, though the sellers tend to be traders and not the farmers themselves. Seeds, seedlings and saplings and other inputs and equipment are acquired at several suppliers and nurseries that have been set up along the main road and which are affiliated with the processors. A small number of local stores in Dar Allouche and El Haouaria also sell seeds, agriculture equipment and treatments. The state retains a role in regulating and coordinating actors and functions in agricultural commodity chains (processing, storage, transport and so on) and the interprofessional groups and associations which emerged in the context of state withdrawal (Canesse, 2014). The government has also embarked on an attempt to generalise the phenomenon of production contracts between farmers and processors which set out the type of crop grown, required technologies, and so on. Reference prices are set annually by a national commission comprising the ministries of commerce, industry, finance and agriculture, and representatives from UTAP and the Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (UTICA), which represents private sector industrialists.

5.4.2 Land, labour and livelihoods on the plain

Agriculture on the plain continues to rely on the different production systems that emerged in the context of the market gardening revolution: sharecropping and other forms of tenure, petty commodity producing smallholders and agricultural labour hired on a daily, usually seasonal, basis (Table 6). Farmers are aware of the different class positions, degrees of poverty and relations of inequality among and between people on the plain. As net sellers or net buyers of labour, farmers on the plain have opposing interests. At the bottom rung of the ladder are farmworkers who possess little other than their labour power. They sell their labour to landholders and tenants in exchange for a daily wage of around 12 dinars, and engage in labour-intensive agricultural work such as weeding, picking tomatoes and threshing peanuts. Their labour is particularly vital at the end of the season, since the high perishability

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[44] They are usually passed on from one trader to another and arrive in hotels and local and wholesale markets. A large amount of the harvest sold in this way presumably ends up being sold in informal markets which has been estimated to consume 60% of all agricultural produce in Tunisia (Tunisie Numerique, 2014).

gardening crops means that timely harvesting and selling is essential. Because the demand for farmworkers' labour varies in accord with the agricultural seasons, they tend to pass through periods of employment and unemployment. Farmworkers are also overwhelmingly female[45] and tend to be the husbands of farmworkers or labourers working in other sectors. The precarity of their work, low incomes and lack of access to land place them among the most disadvantaged groups on the plain. Farmers occupying higher class positions want to avoid at all costs having to become farmworkers, knowing full well that they risk slipping into daily wage labour if confronted with a livelihood crisis.

Class position	Relation to land	Main method of surplus appropriation
Farmworkers	Landless	Labour hiring
Sharecroppers	Share tenancy	Rent in kind, money rent
Fixed-renters*	Fixed rent tenancy	Money rent
Small farmers (<10ha)	Landownership	-
Medium landowners (10-20ha)	Landownership	-
Large landowners (>20ha)	Landownership	-

Table 6. Class positions in relation to land and the mode by which labour is appropriated. '-' refers to where it is non-applicable. *Fixed-renters refer to where most or all of the land is rented.

Sharecroppers and fixed-renters are somewhat better off than agricultural workers. They have obtained access to land through tenure agreements with larger landowners and exchange their crops as commodities on the market. Their taking on board of a share of the farming costs, risks, their occasional exploitation of seasonal labour (which includes recruiting friends and immediate and more distant family members), and sales which deliver returns to family labour means they simultaneously occupy positions of both labour and capital. While we may loosely refer to both sharecroppers and fixed-renters as 'tenant farmers', the main differences between them is that sharecroppers pay rent as a percentage of the value of the harvested crop while fixed-renters pay a fixed cash amount.[46] Though sharecropping is generally more common than renting, sharecroppers view renting more positively. They associate fixed rents with more decision-making power over what to grow and they perceive it as less exploitative than rents paid under sharecropping.

Small farmers, unlike tenants and agricultural workers, exercise ownership rights over land. Their holdings are found in close proximity to the communal areas of the plain, such as Dar Allouche, while larger landholdings tend to be found in the non-communal areas more distant

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[45] Male research participants would occasionally refer to farmworkers as "women" rather than "workers", "labourers" etc.

[46] Research participants on the plain use the French term 'métayer' for 'sharecropper' rather than an Arabic equivalent.

from the main road. Small farmers' control over land offers them advantages that tenants and agricultural workers lack: land can be used as collateral and its ownership is secure; it can be improved through small investments and it can be sold and its owners may benefit from rising land prices. Farming practices of small farmers resemble those of tenants however: the familial character of labour, low levels of mechanisation, and the resort to seasonal labour. Occasionally, small farmers might rent plots belonging to other farmers for a fixed cash amount, which they incorporate into their existing production activities.

Medium-size farms are more mixed in terms of their modes of operation. They may be exploited through owner-occupation, where family and seasonal labour is drawn upon and the household receives all of the income, or they may depend on sharecropping or fixed-renting, making their owners more capitalist-oriented. Among medium landholders, the size of landholdings means that fixed rents and the division of seasonal incomes are unlikely to yield substantial figures, and so their resort to tenancy arrangements is an option where, for instance, they have chosen to retire from farming but want to retain a stream of income or where they have moved out of farming after having found work elsewhere. Large landowners in contrast control access to more than 20 ha through either large properties or a combination of medium sized farms. They may do little or none of the physical work, depending entirely on the labour of tenants and agricultural workers – though the level of their engagement in farm activities, as mentioned, depends on the type of tenure arrangement in place. These large landowners are different to other groups on the plain. They are fewer in number and some hold high statuses as successful farmers and entrepreneurs. Often these landowners do not live nearby and have long held other jobs outside of agriculture, such as in industry.

5.4.3 Poverty in Tunisia

The development trajectory of the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain is not representative of Tunisia as a whole or even of Cap Bon, and there are profound inter- and intra- regional variations across the country. Detailed data on poverty and inequality on the plain itself is unavailable, but some figures are available on poverty and development levels in the delegations of Haouaria and Hammam El Rhezez, where the plain is located (Illustration 4). According to government figures, there is a significant disparity in poverty rates between Haouaria and Hammam El Rhezez in the north and the other governorates in the delegation of Nabeul (Figure 8). Haouaria, Hammam El Rhezez, and Takelsa have the highest poverty rates among all of Nabeul's delegations according to INS figures.

The Tunisian government has also ranked all delegations in Nabeul governorate according to their levels of development. The rankings are calculated by measuring life convenience (infrastructure and services; health) social environment (social; demographic and education),

economic activity (employment absorption capacity; economic activity i.e. Herfindahl-Hirschman Index) and the job market (employment; job market vulnerability). Nabeul-level rankings are illustrated in Table 7 while complete figures for these and its methodology can be found in Ministry for Regional Development and Planning (2012a; 2012b). Additional data from the 2014 General Census of the Population and Habitat (INS, 2016b) for the delegations of Haouaria and Hammam El Rhezez is supplied in Appendix 12.
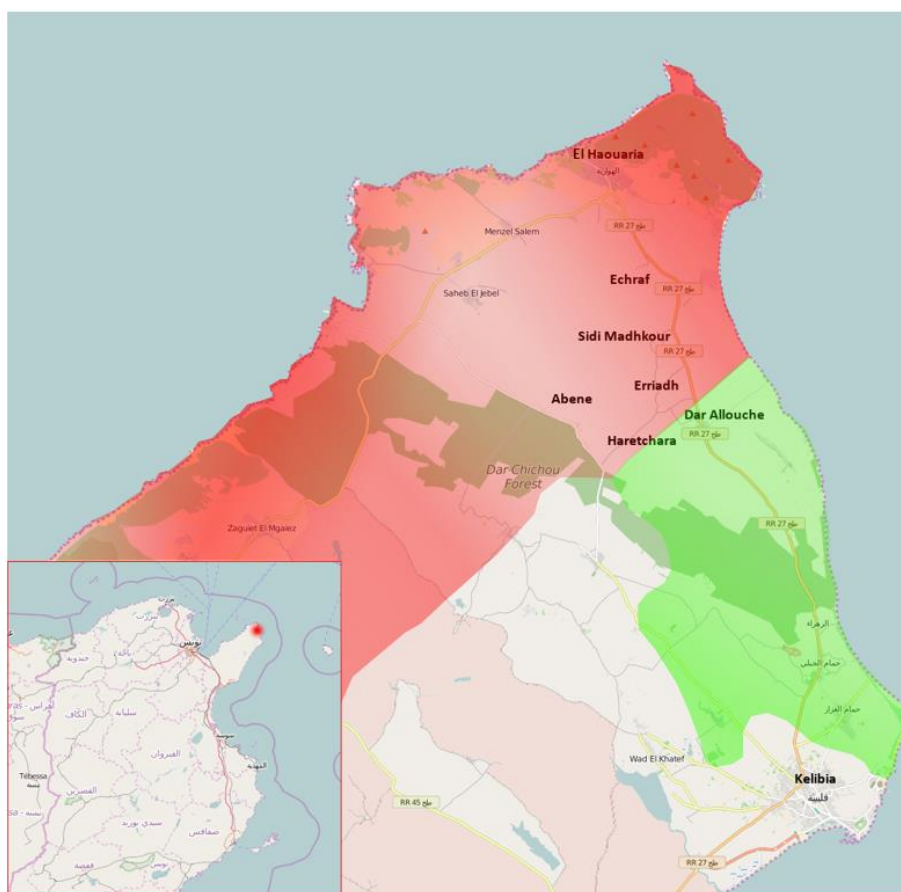
Illustration 4. The El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain showing the delegation of Haouaria to the west and the delegation of Hammam El Rhezez in to the east. Source: OpenStreetMap and researcher edits.

The INS periodically releases poverty figures for the country, which is calculated as the percentage of population with a consumption level below the poverty line (INS, 2012).[47] The most recent figure stands at 15.2% in 2015, having undergone a decline from 25.4% in 2000 (Table 8). Recalling that Haouaria is primarily non-communal and Hammam El Rhezez communal (Appendix 12), the national poverty rate stands at 10.1% in communal areas (cities and towns) and 26% in non-communal areas (INS, 2017). The poverty line is calculated via the food poverty line and the non-food poverty line, and poor households are considered ones where consumption per capita is below that line (INS, 2012). These figures also indicate

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[47] See INS (2012 2017b) for a methodological overview.
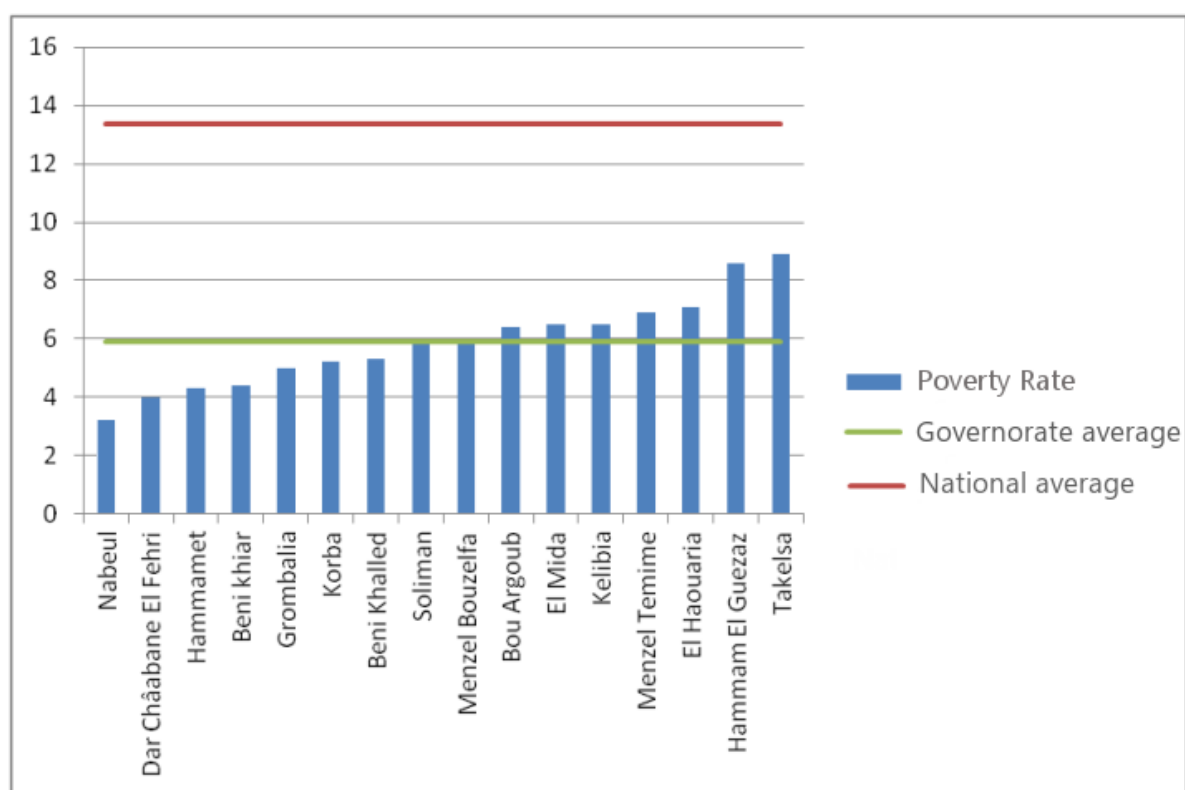
Figure 8. Poverty in Nabeul's delegations. Source: Ministry for Regional Development and Planning (2012a).

Delegation	Indicator	Governorate rank	National rank
Hammamet	0.526	1	22
Nabeul	0.523	2	24
Soliman	0.478	3	36
Grombalia	0.458	4	48
Dar Chaabane El Fehri	0.456	5	50
Beni khiar	0.424	6	64
Beni Khalled	0.399	7	79
Korba	0.392	8	84
Kelibia	0.380	9	92
Menzel Boulzelfa	0.372	10	95
Menzel Temime	0.357	11	105
Bou Argoub	0.350	12	109
El Mida	0.339	13	118
Haouaria	**0.304**	**14**	**138**
Takelsa	0.298	15	143
Hammam El Rhezez	**0.293**	**16**	**147**

Table 7. Delegations in Nabeul governorate ranked according to level of development at the governorate and national levels. Source: Ministry for Regional Development and Planning (2012a; 2012b).

poverty in Tunisia is overwhelmingly rural. The social categories among which poverty is at its highest include agricultural labourers in second place at 28.9%, behind the urban and rural unemployed at 40.3% in first place (INS, 2012). Landholding farmers, the vast majority of whom are smallholders, fare slightly better than agricultural labourers on the same indicators (20.0%).

In respect to gender, the INS poverty figures are not gender disaggregated (most data are for households). However, gender disaggregated variables indicate the gendered nature of rural poverty in Tunisia and poverty more generally (INS, 2015), supporting arguments concerning the feminisation of poverty in the country (AFTD, 2014; Ministry of Women, Family and Children, 2016). The INS (2015) and the Centre for Research, Information and Documentation on Women (CREDIF) has made much of this data available (CREDIF, 2018). For example, national and regional unemployment is higher for women than for men (Appendix 8) while levels of education (illiteracy, first and second cycle schooling) are lower for women (Appendix 9). In 2012, rural women in Tunisia made up 35% of the female population, yet while their participation in productive agricultural activities has been accounted for in various studies (e.g. ATFD, 2014) less than a fifth (19.7%) have their own incomes and are dependent on other family members. 65.3% of men in contrast have their own incomes (Republic of Tunisia, 2013), while the daily wage for agricultural work for men tends to be higher than for women (ATFD, 2014). In Nabeul specifically, the daily wage for men has been found to be around 16.378 dinars while for women it is around 13 dinars, or a difference of 26% (consistent with the national figure).

	2000	2005	2010	2015
Poverty line (Dinars)	683.0	897.0	1,206.0	1706.0
Poverty rate (%)	25.4	23.1	20.5	15.2
Communal	16.6	14.8	12.6	10.1
Non-communal	40.4	38.8	36	26

Table 8. Poverty in Tunisia. Source: INS, 2016a; 2017; 2018. Other agencies have produced poverty estimates that differ from these. In 2011 for instance, the Ministry of Social Affairs estimated the poverty rate to be 24.7% according to the international standard of $2 a day per person.

Moving to the governorate and regional levels, the INS calculates and releases poverty figures for each.[48] The figures again reveal sharp disparities between the coastal and interior regions and variation between the governorates (Appendix 10).[49] In addition, the Ministry of Regional Development and Planning (2012b; 2012c) has ranked the governorates according to level of

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[48] Government poverty figures can vary depending on Ministry. In 2011 for instance, the Ministry of Social Affairs estimated the poverty rate to be 24.7% according to the international standard of 2 dollars a day per person (AfDB, 2012b). The INS's poverty figures are also contested by Tunisian civil society organisations such as the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES), which claim the rate is much higher (e.g. FTDES, 2018).

[49] The governorate of Nabeul is included in the northeast region along with Bizerte and Zaghouan.

development, identifying Nabeul in 6th place behind Tunis, Ariana, Ben Arous, Monastir, and Sousse (Appendix 11).[50] As the figures indicate, coastal regions tend to fare better than the country's interior regions in terms of poverty and levels of development. These enjoy the lion's share of national industry and tourism, and enjoy more diversified economies (World Bank, 2014) owing largely to the historical development model which favoured the coastal areas at the expense of the hinterland. These coastal areas include Cap Bon, which has a strong tourism sector and numerous agriculture industries (Appendix 3). Attention to inter- and intra-regional inequalities is also revealing. Though the INS' poverty figures indicate declines since 2000, GINI coefficient figures reveal that intraregional inequality increased in the Northeast between 2010-2015 while they actually decreased in all other regions. The nature of these decreases in other regions however, the INS notes, indicate growing interregional disparities, continuing a trend since figures from the year 2000 (OECD, 2015; INS, 2015; 2016a; 2012). These results have been interpreted by the INS, World Bank and AfDB as confirmation that the "identification and alienation problems felt by the citizens of disadvantaged governorates increased during the 2000-2010 period" (INS, 2012, p.23).

5.5 The Tunisian uprising and Revolution

5.5.1 Prelude to the uprising

Liberalisation and restructuring of the agriculture sector from the 1970s onwards, as outlined in this chapter, unfolded without any parallel opening up of the national political space. Independent organisations and other forms of representation remained off limits to people with rural-based livelihoods, as well as elsewhere in Tunisia, while the Tunisian Union for Agriculture and Fisheries (UTAP), the only major farmers' association in the country, continued to function as a relay of political power and did not genuinely represent the interests of poor farmers (King, 2003; Gana, 2011; Ayeb and Bush, 2016). Gana (2011) observes that rising tensions around land and other resources in Tunisia accompanied liberalisation and state withdrawal over the course of the 2000s, but that it remained largely bottled up in the absence of formal mechanisms for conveying demands to policymakers. When management of resources for agriculture, such as water, began to be transferred to user associations in the 1980s, these became subject to capture by influential individuals. Local authorities became increasingly able to intervene in the distribution of resources to the detriment of its users and genuine local resource management (also Canesse, 2014), with studies as late as 2010

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[50] The Indicator of Regional Development at the governorate level is calculated differently to the delegation level and considers knowledge economy (education; communication), employment and wealth, health and population, justice and equity (Ministry of Regional Development and Planning, 2012b; 2012c also Appendix 11).

identifying growing conflicts around land and water that were associated with weak user associations and resource capture by more influential local actors (Gana, 2013).

A further source of tension in the years leading up to the uprising was the issue of rising farmer debt and difficulties making repayments, particularly among small farmers facing lawsuits from the banks and at risk of losing land (Gana, 2011). Quite unusually, farmers in Regueb and Sidi Bouzid protested in front of the governorate headquarters against the BNA and liquidation proceedings in June and July of 2010. A sit-in was organised by twenty indebted families to oppose the expropriation of their land, while a subsequent protest march at the governorate headquarters was violently repressed by police (Gana, 2011).

5.5.2 Farmer mobilisation and the 'rural and agricultural roots' of the Tunisian Revolution

Occasional and spontaneous forms political contention such as these (Fautras, 2015; Gana, 2011; Beinin, 2015) came to a head in December 2010 and January 2011 with more extensive general and sectoral mobilisations in the context of the uprising and transition. The "explosion of demands for social justice in rural areas" (Gana, 2013, p.210) from December 2010 began with the oft-told story the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a street vendor in the predominantly agrarian region of Sidi Bouzid who had been repeatedly harassed by the police and blamed municipal regulation and bribery for undermining his livelihood (Perkins, 2014; Elloumi, 2013). At first, Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation drew a small gathering in Sidi Bouzid but quickly grew into a larger protest movement. In the following days and weeks, the uprising spread from the poorest areas of Sidi Bouzid, Gafsa and Kasserine to the poor suburbs of Sfax and Greater Tunis initially, before spreading to the centre of the capital where demands shifted the movement from an uprising to a revolution that saw the ouster of Ben Ali (Elloumi, 2013). This passage from rural-based contention to a larger national movement, Elloumi (2013, p.195) suggests, revived a "Tunisian tradition where uprisings against the central government have often had a rural origin" (also Gana, 2012; 2013), passing first through those parts of the country most affected by regional inequalities and poverty that the INS statistics reveal.

Initial claims advanced by protesters in these regions were socio-economic in nature, concerning work, the dignity it provides and freedom (Elloumi, 2013; Perkins, 2014). Initial events in Sidi Bouzid all referred to the deteriorating local social-economic situation and of the agricultural and rural regions more generally (Elloumi, 2013). As the uprising unfolded, mobilisations among farmers of different sizes and classes took multiple forms and had various objectives: contesting UTAP and the agricultural organisations; sectoral mobilisations; demands for land; and mobilisation by profession e.g. farmworkers. For Gana (2013), these mobilisations would seem to signify a reactivation of class struggle in the Tunisian countryside. These farmer mobilisations along class cleavages are evidence of what she (2013)

has referred to as 'rural and agricultural roots' of the Tunisian Revolution (also Elloumi, 2013; 2015; Fautras, 2015; Lahmar, 2015), where an accumulation of grievances has followed from several decades of agricultural restructuring and liberalisation, as outlined above; the promotion of large-scale farming and irrigation at the expense of small farms; and the reduction of subsidies and increasing production costs that have pushed farmers into debt and out of agriculture. The multiple forms of farmer mobilisation and their objectives are considered in more detail here.

In the first instance, the legitimacy of UTAP representatives was challenged by a protest movement in different parts of the country that occupied regional units and demanded union reform. Protesters demanded the ouster of former regime staff and improved access to the union for farmers, with varying degrees of success. In addition, many of the various GDA that had arisen in the context of state withdrawal were similarly challenged on the grounds of mismanagement and lack of representativeness. Water associations were subject to intense protest during the uprising and in the immediate transition period, and demands made for free access to water and state inspections and oversight (Gana, 2011; 2012). In May 2011, a mineral water company was looted by inhabitants of the Joumine delegation that were demanding improved access to water, while in July a sit-in by inhabitants of Sidi Othman and the kidnap of agricultural services representatives was intended to contest GDA legitimacy and demand improved water access.

Sectoral mobilisations meanwhile included those organised around the milk, tomato and cereal sectors in favour of changes to the terms of exchange between producers and processors (Gana, 2011; 2013; Ayeb and Bush, 2016). Contestation in the tomato sector occurred mainly in Cap Bon, and though the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain was relatively calm during this time, sit-ins and factory blockages organised around nearby Korba, Menzel Horr and Sidi Othman led to the closure of five processors.[51] In the milk sector, protesters contested the monopolies at the level of packaging and processing and conditions imposed on producers, and herders protested in front of the Ministry of Commerce and Handicrafts in Tunis. In cereals, farmers organised against the system of grain pricing, grading and the fee schedule, and expressed anger towards the market power which a small group of grain collectors were holding.

In respect to land, large farms managed by development professionals (SMVDA) were attacked, damaged and looted on account their connections to the former regime and the family of Ben Ali. Gana (2011; 2013) suggests these actions were rooted in feelings of injustice on

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[51] According to Gana (2013), the protesters were unsuccessful in having the fixed price for tomatoes revised upwards (from 115 millimes), with the administration and industry claiming that the price had already been set and could not be changed in the middle of the season.

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the part of small farmers and agricultural labourers who had been evicted and excluded when ownership of state land was transferred by the state to these private companies. A number of SMVDA were occupied by small farmers demanding a return of the land while others were occupied to disrupt preparation for the subsequent season. In other cases, demands have been made for larger-scale redistribution of land to small farmers and agricultural labourers, including land that had been confiscated over the colonial period (Gana, 2011).

Finally, actors also mobilised on the basis of profession. Agricultural labourers for example engaged strikes, sit-ins and petition signings in favour of improved working conditions and salaries (Gana 2011). In January for example, labourers in Zaghouan went on strike to demand a pay rise and 10% share of the farm turnover, while in Grombalia in Cap Bon, vineyard labourers occupied land and buildings in August 2011 to demand improved incomes, threatening to burn the area down if their demands were not met (Gana, 2011).

5.5.3 The transition

Much of the transition period has seen the continuation of popular protest of varying intensity around various local and national issues. In particular, the renewal of social mobilisation, especially since 2015 (Appendix 13a, 13b, 13c), has come as a response to the failure of new economic opportunities to materialise over the transition period, with actors organising around the same grievances and demanding that the state address persistent poverty and unemployment and improve access to resources and services (OST, 2017; FTDES, 2018).

National data on individual and collective protests in the country is revealing. The FTDES, which records, analyses and routinely reports instances of social mobilisation and protest in the country, has noted an increase in the number of protests in recent years, from 4,416 in 2015 to 10,452 in 2017 (Appendix 13a) and which are concentrated mainly in the interior regions of the country and Tunis (Appendix 13c). The figures also indicate that protests are predominantly around economic, social, political and education matters (Appendix 13b), with the exact issue varying on whether it is local, regional or national in nature. In respect to farming and agriculture, examples include sit-ins, which have been a regular occurrence in post-Revolution Tunisia. For instance, in 2012 farmers blocked the entrance to the city of Beja and organised a sit-in in protest of price changes and production costs (Tuniscope, 2012). Two years after the Cap Bon tomato protests, farmers in Sidi Bouzid organised a sit-in in 2013 that raised again the problem of pricing in the tomato sector and rising production costs that were threatening the reproduction of small farms, claiming it was making them poorer (L'Economiste Maghrébin, 2013). In 2015, date growers in Kelibi organised a sit-in and march at the governorate headquarters over issues of prices and water access (La Presse, 2015b)

while in October 2016 farmers in Siliana protested fertiliser and pesticide costs outside the governorate headquarters (African Manager, 2016).

Why has social mobilisation in the countryside persisted over the course of transition? For a number of scholars, the continuation of 'business as usual' in national agricultural policy has meant the lingering structural issues that characterised the uprising period have gone unaddressed (Elloumi, 2013; 2015; Ayeb and Bush, 2016). Elloumi (2015) and Ayeb and Bush (2016) locate these continuities in the larger political economy of the (neo)liberalisation of North African states, which for agriculture has meant shunning small farmers in favour of large ones and fostering export-led growth. As the next chapter indicates as well, farming in the transition period became more difficult for many in the immediate years, as discussed in the secondary literature and the research findings in this study.

A further explanation is elaborated by Elloumi (2013; 2015) who suggests that while the initial uprising carried the voices, grievances and expectations of rural people in Tunisia, these were eventually marginalised from popular and public discourse, initially as the uprising spread to the centre of Tunis and then over the course of the transition. The territorialisation of the uprising in December 2010 and January 2011 led to a shift towards political demands in the capital that eventually saw the ouster of Ben Ali, and this led in turn to an agenda for transition set largely by urban elites and interests. Elloumi (2013) notes that the failure to recognise and acknowledge the rural origins of the Revolution, and the issues and demands made during the uprising's early days, is reflected in both public discourse during the transition and priorities for transition that emerged. In respect to public discourse, he refers to the ongoing debates around whether the country should adopt a more Islamic model of society or to press on with its social and cultural achievements, particularly in respect to women's rights, while priorities concerned "an effective process of reconstructing a democratic state with new institutions and a new constitution, all of which requires the election of a constituent assembly and the creation of a democratic transition process" (Elloumi, 2013, p.200). Ultimately, he (2015, p.366) suggests

> *the rural world is in turmoil, with advocacy movements highlighting the expectations of rural people in this* [transition] *phase and their willingness to be involved in decision-making and choosing the terms of development model, as well as the modalities of sharing the fruits of growth. Failure to meet these expectations may increase pressure and lead Tunisia to a new revolt that may not be as peaceful as the Revolution of 17 December.*

Summary

Agriculture on the plain today is characterised by agro-industrial activities that were fostered in different ways over the post-Independence period. It is partly mechanised and dependent on chemical fertilisers, pesticides and modern seed varieties. Sharecropping persists alongside other forms of land tenure, as well as petty commodity producing smallholders, larger landowners and wage labour. The aim of this chapter has been to underscore a set of processes that provide a context for the findings chapters and which will later contribute to the development of an explanation for the needs of sharecroppers on the plain in chapter 8. The main relevant themes it has drawn out are the switch from subsistence farming to production for market and the development of agrarian capitalism on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain; the role of the state in agricultural development and state regulation; and the retreat of the state in the context of market liberalisation and agricultural restructuring. This chapter has identified three broad periods in a historical process of integrating farmers on the plain into capitalist social relations. It began by describing how the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain in the late 1940s saw the beginnings of a switch from subsistence farming to commercial production that responded to growing demand and urbanisation across the country. The development of this agrarian capitalism gathered pace shortly after Independence through direct state intervention that involved dissolving the 'archaic' habous landholdings, state support for agriculture industries, and support mechanisms for farmers that would allow them to take up and participate in intensive irrigated agriculture. Landless farmers were integrated into a system of sharecropping (metayage) and could also benefit from state support. In the third period, from 1970 onwards however, economic liberalisation and later agricultural restructuring meant a gradual shift in state support for agrarian capitalism to one that was less interventionist and more capital-friendly. The government set about encouraging private investment and slowly removing the various items considered barriers to sector profitability and market exchange, creating the conditions for export-led growth.

The chapter further identifies these developments in rural areas and agriculture as part of the 'rural and agricultural roots' of the uprising and Revolution in Tunisia. These developments generated grievances and underscored tensions in the years prior to the uprising in 2010/11, eventually culminating in an "explosion of demands for social justice in rural areas" (Gana, 2013, p.210). The chapter provided an overview of the recent characteristics and trends of poverty and development in northern Cap Bon and on the national and regional levels, identifying the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain within the region's poorest and least developed delegations. It went on to discuss some of the most significant and class-based farmer mobilisations in the context of the uprising, the claims grievances that were voiced, and how theses have continued and even intensified during the transition period as agricultural

as the structural issues giving rise to grievances linger on. While The El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain did not witness any organised protest in 2011 when rising rural tensions came a head in 2010/11, the next chapter reveals it nevertheless remains a site where people face mounting difficulties satisfying needs and where grievances are high.

Chapter 6 Needs and priorities on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain

Honestly, when they do this study they are going to talk about our problems. We want the voices of farmers to be listened to because [the farmer] *is in a difficult situation. The farmer has no one to protect him. There is no one who defends the farmer. The farmer is living in the jungle.*

Interview with Mehdi

Introduction

This chapter provides an account of the needs and priorities of poor sharecroppers on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain as our phenomenon of interest. In doing this, the chapter refers to several forms of physical and psychological suffering that have been revealed through qualitative data coding, which in CR terms indicate causal mechanisms are active and producing effects.[52] These are: low money incomes and consumption; perpetual indebtedness; overwork and fatigue; uncertainty; instrumentalisation and exploitation; loss of control over work and exchange; an absence of 'care'; a lack of meaningful work; and a perception of 'going nowhere'. These provide evidence for the frustration of four abstract general needs, which are introduced and described in section 6.2: the need for social-economic security, for relatedness, for esteem and self-worth and for self-realisation. These forms of suffering are at the same time a source of grievances for farmers. Research participants expressed a range of views about changes they would like to see as a way of ameliorating their circumstances, and a summary of priorities for change is provided in section 6.3. Because of the concerns of Mehdi and other farmers over not having their voices heard, liberal and extensive use of interview excerpts has been made throughout this chapter.[53] The chapter sets the scene by opening in section 6.1 with an overview of a participants' perceptions that they, as poor farmers, are increasingly struggling to satisfy the conditions for their livelihoods and that agriculture on the plain is heading toward 'collapse'.

6.1   Agricultural deterioration, not development

At the time of fieldwork, research participants sensed that the conditions for their livelihoods had deteriorated rather than developed over the course of recent years and were bleak about future prospects. Increasing production costs, insufficient returns to labour, and the spectacle

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[52] Demi-regularities are rough-and-ready generalities or event regularities which appear in empirical data as "rough trends or broken patterns" (Fletcher, 2016, p.5; also Lawson, 1999).

[53] In doing so, care has been taken to ensure that the excerpts 'ground' the conceptual writing rather than act as a substitute for it. Some excerpts are contained in the main body of the text while others have been footnoted.

of other farmers having to exit agriculture led them to position farming on the plain along a development trajectory characterised its gradual deterioration leading to its eventual 'collapse'. This collapse refers to small- and medium-scale farming of the kind that sharecroppers, renters and other smallholders engage in, in contrast to larger scale operations of other, "wealthy farmers" who are perceived as better positioned to weather difficulties. Since 2011, some farmers around Dar Allouche are selling off plots of land earmarked for agriculture to urban buyers for building holiday homes close to the beach. Khalil's assessment of the demise of farming, his future fortunes and the absence of alternatives was shared by most other research participants:[54]

> *People cannot even gain money to eat because of agriculture. I don't have any other field* [specialisation, sector] *to work in. If I could work in another field I'd go. Agriculture is no more, in my personal opinion as a person practicing farming - and I've been practicing it since my birth* (interview with Khalil).

The prosperity associated with farming in earlier decades, which most research participants are old enough to remember, serves as a baseline for comparison. Participants would recall how the conditions for farming were generally better in the past but that they have significantly deteriorated in recent years – from the 1990s onwards, but especially since the Revolution in 2011. While agriculture incomes had always been 'low', these have been undergoing a squeeze as costs continue to rise. Jamel, a sharecropper who has worked on the same piece of land with his family for about 60 years, explained that rising costs and insufficient returns over the years had reduced farming to a subsistence activity:

> *There is no profit.* [Farming] *is just for subsistence. Manure is expensive and everything else is expensive, but the farmer is only just living from farming* […] *In the 1960s you could make money. Now you can't get a profit anymore. Everything has gone up* [in price]. *Do you understand me? We used to get 'moniter' and 'mina'* [fertilisers] *for low prices. Now the prices are so high that the farmer can't* [go on] *anymore…this is it* (interview with Jamel).

From the interview data, there are broadly four periods which participants tended to classify as generally better or worse for their incomes and the conditions for farming. These are presented in Table 9. Though participants would typically have a particular year or period of a few years when the household was undergoing a crisis associated with particular set of incidents, such as a failed crop or debt crisis, the table below accounts for how incomes and

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[54] Skander, a smallholder in Dar Allouche, was the single exception. While he shared with other research participants the view that gardening on the plain was in crisis, he felt that organic agriculture and production for export might one day represent a way out.

conditions are perceived in general. Admittedly, not all of the research participants lived through and worked over all four periods, though all observe a deterioration across the period of their working lives.

Period	Household incomes	Conditions for farming
2011-2015	Production costs rising enormously and incomes cannot keep up. Farming has become a livelihood "just for living".	Very bad. 'Exploitation' of farmers is higher than ever; proliferation of suppliers on the plain; environmental degradation; plant diseases much more common; increase in livestock theft and more insecurity on the plain; debt even more common; few prospects for social-economic advancement; land on the plain too expensive to buy; farmers leaving agriculture, selling land, and looking for opportunities in the cities and towns; little or no state support
2000-2011	Production costs rising and incomes falling.	Neutral to bad. State support disappearing but the department of agriculture had a visible presence; indebtedness becoming more common; plant diseases became more common and more treatments appeared on the market; livestock theft happened but it was rare; fewer opportunities for social advancement than in earlier years
1990s	Production costs go up but remains acceptable	Positive to neutral. Department of agriculture becomes less visible; complaints are registered at the department of agriculture
Pre-1990s	Farming viewed more positively; incomes were better than at any other time because production costs were low	Positive to neutral. Few diseases and treatments; environment was good and not degraded like now; inputs were cheap; some people left urban centres to become farmers; households had the chance advance; land was affordable; subsidies existed on diesel; loans and other state benefits were accessible mostly to landholders

Table 9. Participant perceptions of changes in household incomes and conditions for farming over the recent three decades.

Participants' accounts of deterioration are consistent with observations about the health of the agriculture sector in Tunisia between 2011 and the fieldwork in 2015/6. Rising farmer debt and dramatic price increases for imported inputs, upon which Tunisian agriculture and the agriculture on the plain in particular depend, followed the country's economic instability since the Revolution (Onagri, 2015; Oxford Business Group, 2016) and persist until the present. Though the problem of farmer debt predates 2011, it has been exacerbated by rising costs, price ceilings and lack of state subsidies since 2011 (World Bank, 2012; Oxford Business Group, 2016; FAO 2013b; Houdret and Elloumi, 2013). In 2016 the Oxford Business Group noted that the sector had seen dramatic variations in production in terms of produce, livestock and processed goods and that these variations were rooted in "inefficiencies that have prevailed since the revolution in 2011" and which include instability in the Libyan market, violation of supply and production quotas and poor sector governance. The Libyan market is

the primary export market for processed tomatoes, a significant crop on the plain, but figures for processing and exports in double tomato concentrate show a dramatic fall between 2011 and 2015 (Onagri, 2015) in the context of the Libya crisis. More broadly, a recent World Bank study (Sy et al., 2017) found production to have shrunk in almost all sectors in Tunisia between 2011-2015, with the agro-food industries losing 6% of revenues and agriculture and fisheries losing 4.4%. Violation of supply and production quotas has been routinely noted (e.g. Champion, 2014; Gana, 2011; 2013; La Presse, 2015a) and was a source of contention between farmers and processors in Cap Bon during the Revolution, as noted above. In the case of the tomato sector, it continues to suffer from transportation problems, the lack of state oversight and an inability to respond to production rises.

As the table indicates, farmers perceive their agriculture livelihoods as having been gradually reduced from one of relative prosperity and advancement in the pre-1990s period to one that is today "just for living". While this perception tells us little about what an 'objective' reduction consists of in the absence of other kinds of (longitudinal) data, it is not especially surprising given what is known about the structural changes to the country's agriculture in recent decade and the conditions for farming since 2011. In any case, what is important here is that these 'subjective' perceptions inform how participants interpret their present circumstances and their grievances and priorities for change. The most recent period 2011-2015, which is considered the worst among all periods, is associated with the period since Revolution in 2011. All participants consider the Revolution to have placed agriculture on the plain in jeopardy and to have led to worsening of their household incomes and conditions for farming. Opinions of the Revolution ranged from passive criticism to strident rejection and a desire to return to the days of Ben Ali.

6.2   Unmet and frustrated needs

During interviews, participants would describe forms of suffering associated with their lives and livelihoods – work and fatigue, sense of security, disempowerment and dependency, and treatment by others, and so on. These descriptions entail both physical and psychological dimensions of suffering, but in the categorisation there has not been an attempt to separate and distinguish between these, if this is even possible.[55] Indebtedness for example is associated with physical and psychological suffering, such as in cases where households have to reduce food consumption (physical) and where debt is simultaneously a source of anxiety and worry (psychological). Table 10 organises the main strands of physical and psychological suffering according to each of the four abstract general needs. What is important to bear in mind is that an understanding of suffering here cannot be exhaustive for largely practical reasons. We were

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[55] Body and mind do not function independently of one another, and each likely affects the maintenance of the other (Ramsay, 1992).

not in a position for example to examine long term health indicators for example, nor able to employ clinical tools for measuring stress or anxiety. While deductive tools such as these have limits of their own, they may be quite feasibly incorporated into realist-oriented research for the purpose of expanding knowledge about our phenomenon of interest. As Patomaki and Wight (2000, p.224) remind us, the scientific process and progress consists of "a constant spiral of discovery and understanding, further discovery, and revision, and hopefully more adequate understanding."

Social-economic security	Relatedness	Esteem and self-worth	Self-realisation
• Low money Incomes and consumption • Overwork and fatigue • Perpetual indebtedness • Not knowing: uncertainty	• Instrumentalisation • Exploitation • Unfair prices • Absence of care	• Limited control over work	• Lack of meaningful work • Few alternatives

Table 10. Needs and suffering.

6.2.1 Social-economic security

The need for social-economic security refers to the cluster of physical survival needs and the security and predictability of satisfying those needs. Galtung (1990, p.309) refers to the former as welfare needs "to avoid misery" and include food, shelter and rest. The need for social-economic security is frustrated when physical survival needs are routinely insecure and unpredictable. While the bulk of immediate physical survival needs are met in the context of sharecropping, there is considerable anxiety about command over the mental, material and social resources to cope with present and future challenges.

Farming "just for living": low money incomes and consumption

Over the course of interviewing, research participants strongly emphasised the centrality and importance of adequate money incomes for consumption. On the plain, sharecroppers are growing cultures not for meeting their own food needs but rather for exchanging their crops, as commodities, with other actors for money. Like other farmers on the plain, they aim to earn as much as they can through these exchanges. The money earned is then used in turn for buying other commodities, such as food for consumption, or possibly seeds and machine services in the context of farming production and reproduction. The rule applies not just to sharecroppers but to farmers of all sizes, as well as landlords who claim their share of the crop in kind. The crop always remains a commodity as its value is realised sooner or later on the crop market. It is necessary to begin with sharecroppers' money incomes because these define the extent to which the research participants are able to consume.

The seasonal and annual money incomes vary in the terms of amounts and what they can do with them. The general phenomenon of low incomes among sharecroppers and other small farmers on the plain, and growing limits on what can be done with those incomes in terms of their purchase power and rising prices has led them to describe farming a livelihood that is "just for living". This term was used frequently over the course of interviewing. In a single year, sharecroppers obtain either a net income which is enough to get by on but little more than that, or they obtain a net loss and debt which threatens to push them under. The close proximity of both extremes underlies research participants' sense of always being on a knife edge between getting by and going under. According to Feres,

> *You work a year to get an income of about 500 dinars, or one thousand…the best of us get 1 and a half thousand. That's if he gets a profit and not a debt. But the majority* [are in debt] … *myself, for the third year I've had debt and not a profit* (Interview with Feres).

Participants' description of farming as "just for living" captures the reproduction character of their livelihoods – that is, where little or nothing is accumulated or invested, and incomes serve for subsistence and meeting the conditions for future farming. Farmers' incomes are directed toward household consumption – feeding the family, transportation, clothing, and so on – and towards future production if incomes in a particular year or season are high enough. The reproduction character of farming also includes a host of other social and cultural pursuits considered necessary by farmers and households which are important for, but not reducible to, their functional economic roles (Sugden, 2013). These include slaughtering a sheep for the Festival of the Sacrifice, funding a marriage, and building a house in which the family can reside.

Alongside strategies for living more prudently, research participants also reported that low incomes, net losses and indebtedness can or has lead them to depress household consumption. During interviews several participants drew our attention to their broken windows or "torn" clothes as symbolic of their fortunes in agriculture and for which they had little money to put right. Prudent living means tenants having to settle for shoes and clothing that are usually second hand, as Adel exclaimed, "I'm going to tell you something: I swear, I swear for 3 years I haven't bought new shoes. I swear, I am wearing shoes of other people. This is the reality [of farming]" (Interview with Adel). In more serious cases, depression of household consumption may also affect food and nutrition of the family when meats are cut from the diet and food intake reduced to vegetables and bread. In such circumstances, farmers may turn to landlords and friends to borrow money for essentials and some purchase food from the grocers through credit.

Perpetual indebtedness

Sharecroppers worry about the material and social implications of debt and of falling into even greater debt to input suppliers on the plain, as threats to their social-economic security and wellbeing. They work not only to generate incomes to fund consumption but to produce enough to release themselves from existing debt relations, if only temporarily. Knowing whether they can repay their debts on time or not is a waiting game. Farmers will only know toward the end of the season, once the crop is ready to be harvested. And if repayment deadlines are extended further they will only know at the end of the subsequent season. If they fail to pay their debts or delay repayment for too long, their creditors impose higher rates of interest that further eat away at incomes. This is already alongside a high rate of interest applied to existing debts around 10 percent per item. Debts can extend over multiple seasons, with the present season's harvest used for servicing the debts of the previous, and suppliers put farmers under pressure to deliver:

> *Feres: I have a kimbyel from last year which hasn't been paid yet. He* [the supplier] *is threatening me, saying that he is going to take the kimbyel to the bank. We spoke to him and told him that we're waiting for the peanuts to pay him.*
>
> *Interviewer: When you sell the peanuts will the problem be solved?*
>
> *Feres: It might solve it but only God knows. Peanuts may solve the problem but it might not. 3,500 dinars is the credit. Only God knows whether or not you can get 3,500 dinars when you sell the peanuts* (interview with Feres).

The threat of the *kimbyel* being handed to the bank pushes farmers to work and return the money owed. When repayment is made the supplier returns the *kimbyel* to the farmer. Even without a *kimbyel*, repayment difficulties come with social as well as material costs. The relationship between the farmer and supplier (creditor) becomes strained, and even if the amount is eventually returned in full the supplier may impose more stringent conditions and higher costs on the farmer at the start of the following season. They may even refuse to lend at all. Worse, farmers may face court and imprisonment for failing to return what they owe – and though it is not common, farmers are anxious about the prospect. Adel, one of the poorer sharecroppers who was facing many difficulties at the time of interviewing, emphasised how important it was for farmers to release themselves from existing relations of debt. He reiterated several times during the interview the psychological burden that debt and work brings:

> *When we, the farmers, when we can pay the supplier and the harvest covers the expenses we're happy. Even if we don't get 100 millimes*[56] *in net income! The*

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[56] In GBP, 100 millimes is worth a little over 3 pence.

important thing is to pay the credit so no one can say: Pay me. […] *When there isn't a large harvest you find him* [the farmer] *thinking all about how he'll pay this and that… he thinks he's going to be imprisoned. When he's thinking about it he's seeing the doors of the prison. There's no help and the farmer is always tired and exhausted because of his situation. May God show them the way* (interview with Adel).[57]

Overwork and fatigue

Farmers are having to work in ways that leave them physically fatigued and without much time for rest. They take on a large number of physical tasks on the farm because of the low levels of mechanisation associated with their gardening, and because of the scarcity of affordable labour which they can draw on at particular points in the year. The high production costs and low incomes generated through selling, alongside landlord expectations for reasonable returns means that each kilo counts for sharecroppers. Research participants occasionally refer to farming as a "struggle" or a "fight" for the highest possible yields and incomes. Marwa, a tenant with several young children, indicated the trade-offs in this "struggle" between physical health on the one hand and the need to generate incomes on the other. She explained with some frustration how little she and her husband make in relation to their labour and the costs to their health that farming brings them:

> *We're tired, and we're fed up of taking care of the crops we plant. We spend money on it, but when it's harvested and it's time to promote and sell it, after the fatigue, we don't get that money back. We have exhausted our bodies and exhausted our money too. What we get is always insignificant, very little* […] *The costs to our health aren't compensated. We are getting nothing after losing our money and our health to the crop* (interview with Marwa).[58]

For some of the older farmers on the plain, their age and health makes overwork and fatigue more pronounced and risky. The strain of work may be cushioned by drawing on the labour of other family members or on the financial support from their children if it is available. In

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[57] The effects of debt on intra-household dynamics could not be gauged in this research for practical reasons. One female research participant however explained that debt and money issues had been a recurring source of spousal conflict, a finding consistent with other studies that have examined the effects of economic stress on intra-household relationships.

[58] Marwa's observation that farming comes with costs to the family's health does not take into account the possible long-term effects on health which are yet to be felt. Empirically measuring these is beyond the scope of this research, but other 'unfelt' needs are likely to include those associated with occupational hazards, such as exposure to agricultural chemicals without the use of protective clothing. Longitudinal research on key health indicators would shine more light onto this and other possible 'unfelt' health needs, which are socially produced, and that may only become experienced by farmers in later life.

other cases, the children of sharecroppers have taken up new tenancy arrangements with landlords when their parents have become physically unable to work, with a part of the generated income going toward supporting them. Some farmers would like to stop working altogether but are unable to because they lack other and alternative sources of income. The older farmers in this research have generally not made enough social insurance contributions over their working lives to qualify for a full state pension, leaving them either in a position of having to either work or rely on their children. The tendency for older rather than younger people on the plain to be engaged in farming is consistent with a national trend of farmer 'ageing', where children have attained higher levels of education and qualifications than their farming parents and have moved away from farming toward other sectors and fields based in the cities, such as industry, engineering and information technology. However, in the context of economic downturn and high youth unemployment, their children might be unemployed or engaged in low paid work in the cities and towns, and not in a strong position to be able to support their parents.

'Not knowing': uncertainty

Through their labour, sharecroppers aim to obtain what they refer to as *sabah*, a plentiful harvest that generates sufficient incomes which cover production costs, which return enough for household consumption and future production, and which delivers a profit to the landlord. 'Not knowing' refers to always present feelings of anxiety about a number of farming uncertainties during and at the end of the season which intervene to disrupt *sabah*. Farmers do not know whether their crop will be affected by a disease or pest and whether the treatments will be effective. They do not know whether they will need to make additional purchases, nor whether their livestock will be stolen. They also do not know if their electricity supply will be cut and whether their machines will break down, and they do not know, at the end, whether they will be able to sell everything they have grown. What makes these feelings particularly acute among sharecroppers is the way the risk is distributed among the different actors on the plain and by their treading a fine line between getting by and going under. Whether those uncertainties materialise or not are matters of either relief or distress, and the 'not knowing' which precedes them is a source of permanent anxiety. Farmers can be confronted with one livelihood problem after another, and they require immediate responses, additional labour, expenses and possibly even more debt. In addition, the effects and consequences of one problem can multiply, aggravate and attenuate others.

Farmers are aware of the uncertainties and risks associated with gardening and generally consider it an unreliable, unpredictable and therefore insecure livelihood. Over the course of interviewing, research participants would occasionally juxtapose their own methods of income generation alongside permanent salaried labour (see below), viewing the latter much more

positively and favourably over their agriculture in terms of its reliability and predictability.[59] Several key uncertainties characterise their gardening as unreliable and unpredictable.

Diseases, pests and treatments

Production risks are shouldered entirely by tenants and landlords. Farmers may be confronted by the sudden outbreak of a disease or pest which threatens some or all of the harvest. This is common in farming and can lead to considerable costs. When faced with a disease or pest, sharecroppers have little choice but to return to suppliers to acquire more treatments. A single treatment can be expensive for farmers on low incomes, and so they minimise costs by buying one or two applications at a time through credit. In the past, when faced with diseases or pests, farmers could effectively apply one or two treatments at low cost. In recent years however, and for reasons having to do with climate change and the susceptibility of imported seeds to local soil diseases (Key informant 1), farmers reported having to return again and again to suppliers to acquire more treatments through cash or credit. The absence of insurance cover or state support for when the crop is lost or damaged means that farmers sense they have been "working for nothing" and they must also shoulder the financial burden of any losses:

> *I have potatoes, did you see them? They could be damaged by wind or rain or a disease. You can see the potatoes – they would become invisible* [if they were damaged] *and I have credit worth 5 thousand. So I would go to borrow money from Mr. Abdel and Mr. Amin to pay the supplier and I don't make any profit. You see them? I planted 2 ha of potatoes. For those 2 ha of potatoes I have credit and I can take you to the provider and show you the bills. I have about 4 or 4 and a half thousand in credit. Credit for those potatoes. Now it's green. If it's suddenly attacked by a disease, or sleet or wind it would be damaged. So for that credit I would borrow money or sell peanuts, or sell what I have to pay back that credit. Pay. And the state does not come and ask me, 'Where are your potatoes? We heard that it was attacked by a disease' or that 'it's doing well.' It doesn't come. No one comes to you* (interview with Khalil).

For Khalil, selling peanuts immediately after harvest to pay off the credit represents a double loss because market prices for peanuts at the time of harvest are always much lower, and because he is deprived of the opportunity to store his peanuts until a time when market prices pick up. If the crop is lost or damaged sharecroppers also shoulder the burden of unpaid labour.

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[59] The emphasis is on permanent and fixed rather than those associated with casual and flexible labour such as farmwork. Salaries were viewed as reliable because there would be a guaranteed money income the end of the month, and predictable because subsequent months would follow the same pattern. Male research participants tended to compare farming to salaried construction work in the towns and cities, while women tended to compare farming to salaried work in the agri-food processors on the plain. Women also emphasised better working conditions in the processors, namely that there is shelter from the sun and rain.

Incomes are based on the quantity and quality of their crop rather than payment for labour time, and so labour remains uncompensated in circumstances when the crop is lost.

Electricity cut-offs

Electricity is an important resource on the plain for powering the irrigation systems but difficulties making electricity payments means that cut-offs are common. Electricity cut-offs and costs, which tend to be shouldered by tenants in full, were occasionally reported as a source of difficulties. Cut-offs involve a functionary from Tunisia's electricity supplier, STEG, arriving at the farm to turn off the supply. Farmers appear to have had no forewarning. Immediate cut offs can damage the irrigation equipment, and access should be restored as soon as possible at the risk of having the farm run dry and the crop damaged. During one interview, a STEG employee arrived unexpectedly and cut the tenant's electricity supply within a matter of minutes.

Theft and personal security

Since the Revolution in 2011, there has been an increase in livestock thefts on the plain which has left farmers frightened for their economic and personal security. Meat fetches a high price on the plain, but livestock is more important to farmers as a safety net which they can turn to when confronted by a livelihood crisis. If a crop is attacked by disease for example and the yield is low, farmers can to sell a cow or a sheep to pay back the supplier when payment is due. Farmers will also turn to livestock selling when they are owing for machine services, such as ploughing, and during electricity cut-offs. Because of the rise in livestock theft, farmers described how nowadays they had stay awake for a large part of the night to guard the animals from thieves. Some had begun bringing the animals into their homes at night time rather than having them in a separate building, while others had abandoned livestock altogether. Theft was also leaving farmers afraid for their personal security. Lotfi, a tenant who had recently had some livestock and caraway stolen in broad daylight, brought us to a small empty room with a mattress on the ground:

> *Look where I live now! I sleep here to control the animals. I brought you here to see this. I have dogs, the window is always open. But I'm afraid…I'm afraid because the thieves sometimes kill farmers to take their cows* […] *In farming our lives are in danger. I spend the night awake in order to keep an eye on the animals. I have the* [telephone] *numbers of my neighbours in case there's something. I open the window and have a look. If I see thieves, I'm not going to confront them. How many people have been killed? How many were tied up and had their phones taken? Many!* […] *If you could see how the farmer with 10 sheep spends the whole night standing on his feet…do you see my stick here?* [he walks up to the door and takes a large, club-like

stick from behind it]. *It's like a gun to me. This is for defending myself in case someone comes in.*

Both tenants and small farmers were affected and troubled by the rise in thefts. Their sense of insecurity is also underpinned by a general perception that the police are no longer as responsive as they were before the Revolution, and a popular suspicion that they may even be in collusion with thieves. Taking on the task of having to guard their livestock, farmers reported being more physically tired from the lack of sleep. It is not clear who and what was driving the rise in theft but research participants suggested that unemployed youths from the towns were to blame as opposed to other farmers.

Selling and markets

Sharecroppers and landlords share risks associated with markets and prices. Farmers who have been locked into debt relations with suppliers over the course of the season may have little or no decision-making power over their selling. While at the end of the season farmers are expected to return the harvest to the processor or supplier and service their debt, or dispose of it elsewhere and service the debt through cash, uncertainty remains up to that point about the price for which those commodities will be sold. There are also doubts about whether the suppliers and processors will even agree to buy their harvest above and beyond the value of the debt owed. They may decide arbitrarily to take or buy only what is enough to cover the costs of the credit and leave everything else behind, putting farmers in the difficult position of having a volume of perishable goods in urgent need of a new buyer. If they cannot find a buyer in time then they have made nothing from the season. Contention is particularly marked around the tomato culture, a highly perishable crop for which fixed prices set at the beginning of the season should serve to insulate farmers from fluctuating prices and provide some predictability. As Karim explained however, processors may push market risks back onto the farmers as a response to changes in supply:

> *We have a big problem with tomatoes, like this year the factory told* [farmers] *they got the quantity they needed, because tomatoes have a limited period after being ready and if they stay out longer they will be damaged. My neighbour here, despite having worked with the factory, in partnership with the factory, they refused to accept his tomatoes because the factory got the quantity it needed. The poor farmer gave up* [abandoned agriculture] *after losing 50,000kg of tomatoes. Calculate how much he loses when 1kg costs 150 millimes. About 3,000 or 4,000 dinars.*

In addition to this, the practice of quality selection was another source of frustration among farmers who feel that the suppliers and processors have been applying arbitrary methods of selection as another method of restricting supply. By applying more rigid selection criteria,

these actors buy a smaller proportion of the farmer's crop or buy only the highest quality pieces and leave behind the rest, as Walid and Chiheb explained (Appendix 5a). A third practice was described as one used by the potato processors who would adjust the terms of the agreement as a response to changes in market supply and demand, but that they may throw farmers a lifeline by offering to buy the remaining harvest at a lower than market price:

> *Adel: In cases when* [the market] *is good, he* [the provider/processor] *takes everything.*
>
> *Interviewer: What do you mean by 'good'?*
>
> *Adel: I mean when there are imports and exports the market is active. When he knows he's able to sell it he* [the supplier or processor] t*akes everything. Otherwise he only takes the amount that covers the credit and tells you he no longer wants to buy it, but that if you want you can sell the harvest for 300 or 200 millimes instead of 500 millimes.*

Whether selling to the processor at this reduced price is viewed as a lifeline or not has to do with the farmer's present circumstances and whether there are any other buyers who are perceived as possibly offering a better deal.

Farmers who began the season by making cash purchases rather than relying on credit are, in contrast, free to decide who to sell the harvest to and can negotiate over the price. If the harvest is not destined for processing, this selling usually happens on the farm rather than at local markets since transport costs and a formal government levy make it less profitable than selling at the farm gate. These goods typically include cabbage, onions, caraway and peanuts. At the end of the season, prospective buyers arrive on the plain and an intermediary takes them from farm to farm where they negotiate a price for buying the farmer's goods. If farmers do not agree to the buyer's offer they can turn it down and wait for another intermediary to arrive, which is not problematic for them because the supply of potential buyers is high. Once it has been sold, the harvest then finds its way into formal and informal parallel markets and hotels and restaurants.

6.2.2 Relatedness, esteem and self-worth

The need for relatedness refers to the interactions with others which are instrumental to meeting other needs or ends, and which in themselves keep people "alive, sane and human" (Ramsay, 1992, p.155). It refers to the relational quality of human social beings, of "our dependence on others for our individuality and sense of self" (Sayer, 2011 p.119). The need for relatedness is not characterised by merely the presence or absence of interactions, such as whether people are socially isolated or lonely, but also on the quality of those interactions: whether interactions comprise relations of equality, equity, care and recognition for example,

or ones of domination, exploitation and oppression. Esteem and self-worth shares a connection with relatedness as "a need to establish a positive sense of self as an individual subject" (Ramsay, 1992, p.156). It is also grounded in individual autonomy, where autonomy is defined through, and dependent on, relationships with other people. At the extreme end, where relationships deny individual subjectivity and involve people being treated as objects, Ramsay (1992, p.156) notes, "the self is defined in deference to another's identity, lead[ing] to a lack of self-worth. The sense of self is lost".

Instrumentalisation and "exploitation"

Rather than relate to landlords, suppliers and processors on equal or equitable terms, research participants perceive that they are being instrumentalised for the purpose of profit-making. A phrase commonly used over the course of interviewing captures sharecroppers' perception: "we are working for others". Participants feel that other actors rather than themselves shape production and become the primary beneficiaries of their work. They juxtapose their diminished incomes and living standards alongside the fortunes and success of their landlords, suppliers and processors, which they feel are made at their expense. As a 'means' to an end, sharecroppers see themselves as an 'exploited' group that are subject to the disciplines and compulsions of a class of wealthier 'exploiters'. Some participants used the term "exploiters" or they used terms like "exploitation" to describe their working relationships with these actors. Grievances are especially directed toward the suppliers and processors on the plain, who are perceived as exploiting them most, and to the state which is perceived as failing to intervene to support them. One research participant described these actors as "colonising"[60] the plain and others drew parallels with relations of servitude and unfree labour.[61] Sharecroppers' sense of their being instrumentalised and exploited is both material and non-material: while they sense the other actors profit materially from their work, instrumentalisation is also associated with the loss of control over both their work and the loss of control over the way resources and services are exchanged. It is accompanied by a sense that other actors of higher class and

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[60] As Lotfi exclaimed, "*Honestly,* [agriculture has had no value] *for many years. The exploitation by the suppliers and the owners of the cooling stores and the factories; they are colonising us. They are colonising farmers. Look, you plant it and you take care of it then you take it with your own hands to them. And they are earning as much as they want.*"

[61] In a family interview in Dar Allouche, Amir compared the behaviour of suppliers and processors on the plain to Nazism, "[The poor farmers] *are required to work for them* [the wealthy people who run the processors]. *I'm going to give you an example that you may know: Hitler. What did he do to Europe? He represented it, he is a Nazi.* [...] *He said that Europe and the whole world was on one side and Germany was on the other side. In his mind, the whole world should work for Germany. He called his community, 'God's chosen people'. A community of Germans, a white race. No one else has the right to life, they should only work for the German community. All the rest are servants. For us now it's the same. We all work for the owners of capital. Every year they celebrate earning a million or two. Why can they earn when we can't? When we earn it's just small*" (interview with Amir).

status positions neither "listen" nor "care" about their misfortunes, with special criticism reserved for the state.

Loss of control over work and exchange

Sharecroppers make the day-to-day farm decisions, organise family and seasonal labour, and procure and transport inputs and deal with suppliers and buyers. While certainly a form of autonomy in work, constraints and compulsions applied to how sharecroppers produce and work lead them to view it as a limited one. Decisions or 'control' is performed directly and indirectly by other actors on the plain. The first layer of actors in this regard are the landlords, who retain a role in managing the affairs of the farm. They hire and fire tenants and have the final say in important planting decisions, such as what to grow and where. The landlord's preferences may not match those of their tenants, and there is little tenants can do when they sense their interests are better served by producing in different ways, such as by increasing or decreasing the area of land dedicated to a particular crop or by switching to a crop whose value and reliability are inversely related. One of the benefits of moving from sharecropping to renting, participants observed, is the greater freedom renters acquire to manage the affairs of the farm and make important decisions like these. There is little need for landlords to directly discipline labour on the plain since tenants contribute their own resources and labour, and stand to lose or gain from the season. There is no need for landlords to resort to costly forms of labour supervision as practiced in capitalist enterprises based on salaried labour. Tenants instead work to generate their own incomes and to meet landlord expectations that there will be regular seasonal surpluses. Those surpluses will cover the landlord's contribution to the costs of production as well as return a share of the profit as rent. Failing to deliver to a satisfactory level leaves tenants at the risk of being replaced by someone else.

Production and labour disciplining is also exercised, perhaps even more pointedly, by suppliers and processors as a layer above landlords. This disciplining is largely indirect – though the suppliers and processors lack access to land for production and though they do not control the labour directly, their ownership of other productive resources, their distribution through lending, and the need for markets allows them to impose their terms on production. These include when farmers must repay; which seed varieties they must use – reportedly of mixed quality[62] - and, hence, their treatments and when they must be harvested; and in some cases how farmers should dispose of the crop. Tenants work to generate surpluses that cover

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[62] Ghassen for instance protested, "And when you talk to the provider, does he understand you? He doesn't! He says you want 'hetma' [seed] potatoes and [he] brings 'hetma' potatoes to you. I don't know what they are, these 'hetma' potatoes!"

the value of the debt, including interest, at the risk of falling into more debt and of compromising one's reputation in the credit market

Sharecroppers associate their instrumentalisation and exploitation with their limited control over the way resources and services are exchanged. Research participants are aware of their limited bargaining situation and perceive the terms of exchange as being largely set by actors in higher class and status positions. They identify their diminished incomes and fortunes in relation to the unequal exchanges they engage in with other actors on the plain. Their sense of exploitation is grounded, in part, on a gap between the actual rates of exchange and their notion of what constitutes fair prices. In producing commodities for exchange, sharecroppers on the plain know that the health of their household incomes are mediated by the relation between production costs, producer prices and consumer prices. As a class of producers, higher incomes or profit follow when production costs are minimal (chemical inputs, equipment, and so on), where producer prices are higher, and where the prices of consumer products are at an affordable level (foods, transport and so on). Fair prices approximate to levels where farming is able to generate reasonable incomes in this order.

On the plain, key consumer products such as bread and oils continue to receive state subsidies, and sharecroppers benefit from lower prices on those products. As production costs have risen faster than producer prices in recent years with consequences for household incomes, farmers consider unfair both the prices they pay for inputs and the prices they sell for at the producer. In most interviews, research participants would illustrate the problem by providing for us a count of seed costs for a particular culture, its treatments, fertilisers, and other expenses, and then juxtapose these alongside its price at the point of sale or collection.

Since labour is embodied in agricultural commodities and that it is through commodity exchange rather than salaries that sharecropper's labour is rewarded, sharecroppers sense of fair prices (and therefore incomes) is also one which should cover the family's own labour costs, or the "fatigue" and "health" that Marwa referred to in the excerpt toward the beginning of the chapter. Low producer prices, high production costs, and rent at 50 percent of the crop value lead to sharecroppers to feel that their labour is either under rewarded or not rewarded at all. According to Amir, "someone like me, I don't add my fatigue into the [production] costs. In 365 days you work for nothing. The mind is always thinking about this and this working for nothing." As the key actors on the plain involved in these particular exchanges, processors and suppliers are perceived as violating farmers' sense of fair prices. These actors appear to exercise a large amount of control over the terms of exchange, while sharecropper's bargaining situation is much more limited. Landlords in contrast are exposed to the same price

mechanisms as their tenants and may also share with their tenants the view that prices are unfair - albeit while continuing to claim 50 percent of the crop value.

"No one listens" and "no one cares": the absence of care

Listening refers to the space or venues that sharecroppers have to speak, and to bargain and negotiate in the exchange of resources and services, and to do so in the presence of an audience. With space and an audience, farmers sense they might be able to negotiate or register difficulties, grievances or discontents in the hope of having them redressed. Care refers to concern and to visible practices or instances of support and assistance or expressions of sympathy or empathy given to sharecroppers by other actors on the plain. 'Care' is closely linked to 'listening' because care is considered to flow from or come as a consequence of the possibility of communication between people. Both notions appear in the excerpt from the interview with Mehdi at the beginning of this chapter. The absence of listening and care is part and parcel of 'working for others' and of working 'just for living' on the plain. It contributes to sharecroppers' sense isolation in production as being left to fend for themselves as individual households.

Other actors on the plain are implicated in an absence of care and listening to different degrees. Some measure of listening and care is implicit in the long-term relationship between landlords and tenants. The landlord is usually the first port of call in the event of a problem on the farm or when the tenant is facing difficulties. Matters are usually resolved then and there, on the farm, and usually face to face, without recourse to other actors on the plain. As also discussed earlier, the negotiation and bargaining space can be limited but research participants recounted that good landlords would engage in small acts of charity or generosity during their face to face interactions, such as sharing a chicken with their tenants or offering an interest-free consumption loan in times of need. Unlike with landlords, the spaces tenants have for communication with suppliers and processors are much more limited. Farmers know the names of the men running the local businesses, but these men are hidden from view and farmers are unable to communicate with them directly. Any engagements with the suppliers and processors are limited to interactions with employees of the businesses, who tell farmers they can do little for them and that they are "just following orders". Most farmers reported having requested to speak directly to the businessmen with the aim of negotiating face to face over prices or new terms to agreements, or to generally register their grievances or request leniency. In every case though, research participants are met with the same responses: that these businessmen are either too busy to talk to them or they are not present. Research participants explained that accepting the terms and conditions was a matter of 'take it or leave it':

The supplier, you cannot see him. He doesn't meet you, Mr. Aziz Abassi and Alwad or the owners of the cooling stores, or Youssef Seddik. You cannot see him and he would not agree to meeting you. You can only communicate with his workers. You can't see him, so who would you negotiate with? With the wall? So, it's [a matter of] *take it or leave it* (interview with Lotfi).

With the businessmen hidden from view, and a pool of employees that are "just following orders", farmers sense that the spaces for speaking and being heard are limited or closed off. Some research participants said that even going to the supplier or processor to try to adjust the terms of exchange was a waste of time and that they had tried before but had since desisted.

Participant descriptions over the course of interviewing suggests relations with suppliers and processors are characterised as purely economic and business relations in which care is absent. Suppliers and processors are profit-motivated and exist on the plain for profit reasons. They retain leverage over the production process, award credit, set prices, buy and sell, select and pay farmers for their crop, but they make decisions arbitrarily and without appearing to consider the needs and circumstances of farmers.

Special criticism is reserved for state authorities who are perceived as neglectful for not providing any visible and direct support to farmers, such as inputs or crop insurance, and for not regulating relations between farmers and other actors. 'Listening' on the part of the state is also limited. Like the suppliers and processors, farmers know the names of important Tunisian politicians and would like to communicate with them directly, but their interactions with the state are limited to the local department of agriculture and its employees, widely perceived as inactive, unresponsive and as having little or no value to them.[63] Also like the suppliers and processors, their interactions with the department are largely impersonal and bureaucratic in character. The state is mostly absent in the exchanges between farmers and other actors, but research participants and other farmers occasionally visit the department, sometimes in small groups and at other times by themselves, in order to request information, financial support or assistance, or to register their difficulties, grievances or discontents for seeking redress. Access to department information presents few problems, but on most other matters, including finance, participants are met with similar responses from its employees: that there is nothing the department can do to help. According to Feres,

we went many times but no one listened to us. They said, 'OK, we are going to find a solution' but in vain. What solution can they find? [...] We [still] *go but even when you go what do they say? 'What can we do for you?' 'Do you have a solution?' 'We*

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[63] The department appears to perform largely a supervisory and managerial role. It grants permission for digging wells, advises on diseases and treatments, and authorises fertiliser purchases.

don't have a solution.' And we're doing our job? And, [they say] '*we're going to find a solution', and 'there'll be a study in the future' but* [in actual fact] *there are no studies* (interview with Feres).

In a different interview, Walid quipped that "even when you go [to the department of agriculture], you find them just sitting there drinking coffee". Though the withdrawal of services and benefits and the perceived inactivity and unresponsiveness of the department pre-dates the Revolution, its worsening since 2011 fits with a widely-held belief that the state in Tunisia in general has become empty shell, where the institutions and bureaucracy exist but are functioning poorly.[64] On matters of direct state support, farmers have witnessed over the course of many years a decline of access to state services and benefits from the department of agriculture. For landholding farmers these include fuel subsidies and grants, and some of our research participants listed these out. Sharecroppers could only ever enjoy these services and benefits indirectly through their landlords, and they were consistent in stating that the department and the state had rarely or had never been there for them. At the time of interviewing, what research participants were receiving from the department was generally described as being of little value - at most, they received information about diseases and treatments if they visited the department with a query, or the department would send off soil or leaf samples to be analysed elsewhere, though some farmers such as Feres reported never receiving the results. In addition, the department had recently distributed a few bags of treatment to each potato grower for the purpose of storage. This was identified as the only resource of any value received from the department, and a limited one at that – though farmers with livestock also benefit from subsidised feed. Adel's response was rather typical:

> *The state doesn't care about you. It doesn't come and ask you what the matter is. Nor help the farmer, and agree that he requires this and that. But it doesn't care about you. No one cares about you. The representatives, when you speak to them, they don't listen to you. It's as if you are speaking to the wall. He won't answer you. He tells you to go away and leave him alone… which means the poor farmer is affliiiiicted* [emphasis]. *He is really afflicted. We are not lying or exaggerating* (interview with Adel).

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[64] Besides the department of agriculture, the only other spaces for state-farmer interaction are formal meetings held with farmers and state officials. These meetings were described by a small handful of research participants who had attended in the past. The events were described as basically invited spaces but where the content of the meetings and who gets to speak shaped by bribery and power interests. Participants explained that problems may be acknowledged by authorities but rarely acted upon. When the plain is visited by state officials from elsewhere, there is also a perception that difficulties of farmers go unrecognised because the officials are shown around by the businessmen running the processors.

The state is also faulted for having failed to regulate the conduct of processors and suppliers and of failing to "control" prices. Particularly since 2011, research participants feel that the presence of the state has declined that their 'exploitation' at the hands of the private sector has increased and their positions worsened. Participants acknowledged that exploitation and their deteriorating position had predated the Revolution, but that they had intensified and become more dramatic after 2011. In addition to the absence of the state 'care', participants were unable to identify any other organisations or groups such as producer organisations or rural unions that provide genuine support or assistance to themselves or to other farmers on the plain. Participants have minimal contact with UTAP, the only rural union at the national level, and research participants described in similar terms to the institutions of the state – as empty, not functioning properly and not acting in the interests of poor farmers.

6.2.3 Self-realisation

The need for self-realisation refers to the need to develop one's capacities, or to realise what Sayer (2011) refers to as 'human becoming'. Less abstractly, it can refer to human, social, economic, cultural development. As Archer (2000, cited in Sayer, 2011, p.110) suggests, "*all* of our human properties (e.g. our capacities to walk, to reproduce, to make things manually, to become language speakers) exist only *in potentia"* – that is, they exist as capacities or powers which must be first 'activated', but such capacities may also be jeopardised by adverse circumstances such as enduring poverty. Self-realisation or 'human becoming' refers to the continual activation of those capacities and powers, but which is always "contingent, path-dependent and open ended […] It therefore follows that human life takes a vast variety of forms, some allowing people to develop and exercise a wide range of powers, some allowing only a limited range, only partially meeting needs, and some causing suffering" (Sayer, 2011, p.110).

Lack of meaningful work

Sharecroppers' perception of their being reduced to "working for others", their exposure to exploitative relations where what is earned is "just for living", limited control over work and exchange, and the perceived lack of development and opportunities for social-economic advancement underlie a shared sense that "we're going nowhere" (Interview with Mehdi). Farming livelihoods have little meaning for research participants other than for satisfying their basic needs for food, shelter and so on. Research participants expressed a general dislike for agriculture and a longing for regular work outside of the sector – for themselves and for children. In earlier decades, some sharecroppers had managed to find ways of moving outside of their immediate structural circumstances when their farming afforded them the possibility to accumulate. Sharecroppers and renters could buy land and turn themselves into smallholders, from which point they could begin to access state services and benefits, be better

positioned to acquire machinery and other resources, and they could, in principle, invest in their land and develop it. In one informal conversation with a sharecropper-turned medium landowner, now sitting atop his own tractor and ploughing his own field, we were told about how his life had improved dramatically after buying land at the beginning of the 1980s. After having sharecropped for around 20 years he became able to acquire his own tractor, accumulate more land, and diversify his agricultural activities, which now included arboriculture and bee keeping.

For today's sharecroppers however, there is a perception of sharecropping as a livelihood will only ever take them so far. They sense the possibilities for social-economic advancement or improvement, and of further distancing themselves from the poverty line through sharecropping have completely ground to a halt. Again, their livelihood is one that is "just for living". The distance between their incomes and price of land has placed land beyond their reach,[65] and even the utility of land as a mechanism for advancement appears ambiguous. They see small and medium sized farmers who are better positioned than themselves also grappling with rising production costs, low incomes and debt. Meaningful work is perceived to lie outside of agriculture, though with some questioning research participants could describe what meaningful work might look like within the sector. We asked Mehdi what he would do differently if he had access to the sorts of support mechanisms he was describing:

> *I would develop* [my] *farming. And in a time like that* [if it were to happen] *I'd do everything in a comfortable way… fertilising the land in a good way because I'd have money. I'd give manure to the land and work enthusiastically because I'd be encouraged* [supported by other actors]. *And everything I plant I'd take care of, and not abandon it in the middle of the season because I don't have money to pay the workers or to buy the diesel or to pay the electricity* [bill], *which would be cut otherwise. If I had the means to take care of the crop until the end*, [my farming] *would be developed. Everyone would work - everyone would work and I wouldn't hesitate to pay the worker 20 dinars because I'm working and making a profit. Mina* [fertiliser] *would become cheap because now it costs 650 dinars. 1000 kg of moniter* [fertilizer] *costs 850 dinars. Where am I going* [what is my future now]*? If those*

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[65] Land ownership remains important for some, "*If I had money, the thing I think most about in my life is… the only thing I think about is land. I want to buy land. Buy land and have my own property and land. But from where? I don't have money to buy any. Land has become expensive. Only the wealthy can buy it. 1000 metres of land costs 30 thousand* [dinars]. *What can I buy? A hectare costs 30 thousand* […] *Land does not come to my mind, we don't know what this is* [anymore]. *In the past we used think about saving money to buy land but now that's gone. It is out of my mind. If I had land like this, I would plant olive trees and citrus trees. You would find another world here. I can show you the land of my neighbour where there are fruit trees. I'll take you to him. It's another world. But where is it the land? Who can buy it now?*" (interview with Khalil).

things happen we'll succeed. If things become… like they were in the past… to decrease [prices] *a little, to look upon us with mercy, to support us, to support us… otherwise we're going nowhere* (Interview with Mehdi).

While this conception of more meaningful work operates within the boundaries of industrial agriculture on the plain rather than outside it, Mehdi's description values improved control, choices and decision making over his aspects of his livelihood. Like other research participants, he suggests broader societal benefits as well and alludes to better relationships between actors involved in farming (tenants and seasonal farmworkers).

"Going nowhere"

If farmers cannot presently find meaningful work inside of production in agriculture, they are constrained by the few opportunities outside of it. The emphasis here is not on alternative forms of work but alternatives that are considered meaningful in terms of improvements to material outcomes and more decision-making or control over what they do. For sharecroppers, the prospect of meaningful alternatives appears bleak. Casual work is not considered a viable alternative to sharecropping because of its association with difficulties comparable to or worse than sharecropping.[66] It may however be a way for tenants to diversify their sources of income while continuing to work the landlord's land. This was the case for one of the sharecropping households only, Mariam, a tenant who pays an additional 10 percent share of total income to the landlord. According to Mariam, the household occasionally turns to temporary work when their farming provides them with inadequate income and leaves the household in financial stress. Two other tenants also reported having taken short periods away from sharecropping in favour of irregular daily work, though they eventually returned to sharecropping.

Livelihood changes on the plain may be strategic, involving the conscious mobilisation and allocation of resources, or it may be more forced upon farmers by circumstances, such as debt. In respect to the former, landholders of all sizes have the means to sell their land and property or turn it over to renting, and then use proceeds to fund a small business. Examples given by research participants included obtaining a driving license and buying a taxi, and buying a truck to become a trader in agricultural goods. If financial stress and debt is the reason for change, landholders may have to sell off some or all of their land and property to pay off what they are owing and be left with reduced scope for meaningful alternatives. Tenants in contrast do not have the option of raising money through land sales and must look for alternatives in the

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[66] As Chiheb explained, "For example [someone] works as daily worker and gets 20 dinars every day, but if it rains he doesn't work and he's responsible for his family - how can he feed them? If it rains the whole week he'll work only one day a week. Can 20 dinars be enough for the whole week?" (interview with Chiheb).

labour market, either as a strategy or through force of circumstance. Whether or not they can procure alternative employment hinges on the dynamics of the labour market, which as discussed in the earlier, is generally in poor health. Research participants' assessment of their chances of finding more permanent and meaningful work elsewhere was low, and they could not relay to us as diverse a set of possible livelihood alternatives as landholders did. As discussed earlier, these alternatives identified consisted mainly of salaried labour in construction in the case of men, and salaried factory work in the case of women.

6.3 Priorities for change

The forms of suffering identified above are at once a source of grievances for research participants and a source of priorities for change around their livelihoods. Grievances can be identified because participants' descriptions of their livelihoods are both descriptive *and evaluate*: farming "just for living" for example refers to the condition of farming (low incomes, consumption, meeting minimum requirements and so on) and an evaluation that there is something not quite right about this. Participants prioritise improvements and changes to their livelihoods, and an overview of these priorities is provided in Table 11. While suppliers and processors, and to a lesser extent landlords, were subject to criticism for instrumentalising and exploiting research participants, special criticism was reserved for the state. To a much greater extent than these other actors, the state is widely held to carry the burden of responsibility for supporting poor farmers. Research participants do not expect their landlords, suppliers and processors to 'care' to the same extent that the state should:

> *Only one thing, our capabilities are not realised because of the state. Our state, I see… if it took a little bit of care of the people who want to work on the land, we would produce everything. We have lands that are fertile and can produce saffron, and we have many lands that produce. People give up because of capabilities […] We can't do anything, because the state should support us. For us we can do nothing, nothing we can do. We have nothing in our hands that we can use. The state should pay attention to the farmer so we can keep farming this land […] The fire is eating us cold and we cannot see it, and the state doesn't care about this situation. [Politicians] are searching for their...who is going to take this position and who is going to be the President and they are arguing, but no one is understanding our condition* (interview with Khalil).

The lack of material support for poor farmers is also considered unjust in light of state support for big business and wealthy farmers. The state is also blamed for allowing farmers to be intrumentalised and exploited by other actors, as Walid and Chiheb explained:

> *Chiheb:* [The state] *is only interested in the owners of capital* [the wealthy].

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Walid: They need the owners of capital. Even hakum[67] *needs them. They support them and not me. They* [hakum] *say it is better to support someone who can employ 100 people in 3 shifts* [morning, afternoon and night]. *But this is nothing.* [The wealthy] *are buying land and building houses and sleeping under the air conditioner. And the one who is sweating has nothing at end* […] [Hakum] is acting like the devil towards farmers (Interview with Walid and Chiheb).[68]

Priorities for change, presented in Table 11, are overwhelmingly social-economic in nature. Research participants emphasised improved incomes and consumption, the means for developing their agriculture and/or opportunities for employment for themselves or family members; fairer and more equitable relationships on the plain and the ending of exploitation; and personal safety and security. These were accompanied by various practical suggestions that imply three types of intervention: bringing the state back into agricultural development; limiting the power of the suppliers and processors; and developing new forms of independent representation or channels for communication through which farmers can speak and be heard. Around matters of land tenancy and relations with landlords, research participants suggested there was little the state would or should change, though the idea of owning land was viewed positively and land reform was raised several times. As is clear from Table 11 however, the priorities of sharecroppers at the time of fieldwork fell majorly on addressing the fault lines between farmers and industrial and commercial capital – and not on matters of land ownership. In this respect, sharecroppers share common priorities with other landholding farmers interviewed on the plain.

6.4   Summary

Analysis of interview data provides evidence for four abstract general needs among sharecroppers on the plain. These are the needs for social-economic security, relatedness, for

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[67] 'Hakum' refers to both the government and the police.
[68] Adel indicates much the same, "*But the state is not interested in these people [poor farmers] - it is interested in wealthy people. It supports people who have thousands while the others are dying. The farmer who feeds them bread, who plants and produces and works hard on the land through the rainy and cold days is dying and no one is noticing. He's always being ground down but those with thousands and millions are supported. You want to plant pepper but they're ridiculing us when they tell us the price is 200 millimes for 1 kg of pepper. How can this be? When one seedling of pepper costs more than 100 millimes. How can this happen? How can 1 kg of pepper cost 200 millimes? [...] What month is this? January? But people haven't received their money until now [because payment delays from the processors]. How can this happen? Why don't they pay people? Why do they take [tomatoes] if they can't pay people? Why doesn't hakum speak? Hakum is the judge. They [processors] have to pay the farmer [first] and then they're free to sell their product however they like. I wait and wait…when my children are hungry… really, they are hungry, I go and tell them I need money and have credit, and that I need money to start working for the next season. But there's no money. But he tells me to me wait and be patient, or go back home, or he tells you go to hakum to complain. What can I do? Why doesn't hakum come and look at our situation? This is the problem we suffer from*" (Interview with Adel).

esteem and self-worth and for self-realisation. These were identified through a discussion of participants' experiences of their livelihoods on the plain, such as being in states of perpetual indebtedness, insecurity, and their experiencing a loss of control over work and exchange. Participants assessed their future prospects as bleak, positioning farming on the plain along a development trajectory characterised its gradual deterioration leading towards its eventual 'collapse'. The chapter also provided an overview of the sorts of priorities for change that emerged during interviews and organised these according to whether they were oriented more around improved incomes and consumption, producing fairer and more equitable relationships, enhancing development and employment, and safety and personal security. The next chapter takes these findings as a starting point and discusses them in relation to the social relations of production and exchange on the plain. Moving from this chapter to the next and into the discussion involves a movement from the question of what the needs of sharecroppers on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain are toward an explanation for why those needs are unmet or frustrated in the first place. In making that movement, we shift from the more 'concrete' circumstances, sufferings and relationships discussed in this chapter toward a more abstract and conceptual presentation and discussion.

Incomes and consumption	Fairer and more equitable relationships	Agricultural development and employment	Safety and personal security
+ **Price controls on inputs for keeping production costs at an acceptable level** + **Ensure fair producer prices** + Increase the reference price for tomatoes − **Reduce price setting powers of suppliers and processors over inputs and producer prices**	+ **Regulation and monitoring of relations between farmers and suppliers and/or processors around**: • Credit and repayment • Quality of inputs • Quality selection • Prices • Payment to farmers for their crops + Flexibility in credit repayments to the state + State informs sharecroppers of their legal rights as tenants + Flexibility and leniency around electricity payments and ending of arbitrary electricity disconnections − **Remove and/or curtail the role of suppliers in managing the distribution of inputs and equipment** − Flexibility in credit repayments to the private sector ❖ An independent union or organisation for representing the interests of farmers; a functioning farmers' union ❖ Space for all farmers to express their views and be heard ❖ Space for farmers to make complaints and seek redress	+ Provide a functioning and responsive department of agriculture + **Access to formal loans and grants for seasonal cultures, machinery and equipment** + **Subsidies or fully subsidised inputs and equipment** + Construct public storage bodies rather than rely on the private sector + Access to crop insurance + Land reform programme for tenants or improved means of accessing land + Incentives to encourage local youths to work in agriculture or to become agricultural entrepreneurs + Incentives to encourage improved employment opportunities for in other sectors, such as in tourism or industry + Means to diversify crops and utilise their own agricultural knowledge ('capabilities') + **End perpetual indebtedness and high rates of interest**	+ Improved law and order to control livestock theft and for ensuring people feel secure in their neighbourhoods + Support for farmers who have had items stolen

Table 11. Priorities of sharecroppers on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain. Symbols indicate the way participants think these can be achieved: by state action or increasing state intervention in agriculture and development (+); by limiting the power of the suppliers and processors (-); and by developing new forms of independent representation or channels for communication (❖). Priorities of greater importance or urgency are highlighted in bold. Frequency was used as a proxy for importance or urgency.

Chapter 7 The social relations of farming

Introduction

Farmers on the plain are inserted into particular patterns of social relations, or structures, which play a causal role in the forms of suffering described in the previous chapter. This chapter presents the findings of abductive analysis involving the theoretical redescription or recontextualization of the data through existing frames of reference provided by the literature on rural poverty studies, introduced in Chapter 2. Recall that relations, structures, powers and so on are not self-evident in the data and their presence has to be inferred by combining observations with theory. The chapter examines three main structures distilled out through this process which are of causal interest and unpacks them in terms of their relations and the key causal powers and liabilities that inhere in them. These structures connect and interpenetrate, with each serving as the basis for a particular mode of surplus extraction. The first is the landlord-tenant relation which underpins sharecropping as a system of agricultural production and is the basis rent payments to landlords as a mode of surplus extraction. The second structure comprises internal relations around farmers and private sector 'suppliers' on the plain which control access to other productive resources, such as seeds and fertilisers, and is the basis of a different mode of exploitation based on debt and interest. The third set of relations refer to those between farmers and industry on the plain, where sharecropper production has been incorporated into commodity chains that link farmers to consumers through agri-food processors and private storage bodies. These relations, which are the basis of a third mode of exploitation based on resource extraction for profit-making, see the delivery of farmers' produce to industrial and commercial actors on the plain who store or transform it into new products that acquire higher value over time or as they are moved along the commodity chain. Each of these structures disciplines and shapes the way sharecroppers work. The landlord-tenant relation is discussed in section 7.1. Section 7.2 discusses the supplier-farmer relation and section 7.3 discusses the farmer-processor relation.

7.1   Landlords and tenants

7.1.1   Access to land

Sharecroppers and other landless labourers start out from positions of dependency vis-à-vis other people and groups that control land and related resources, such as water. As discussed in chapter 2, sharecropping emerges as a particular system of agricultural production where landless labourers acquire access to land to produce in exchange for rent payments to its owner, either as a proportion of the crop yield or its market equivalent. A part of that rent will also include surplus extracted from hired labour. On the plain, tenants have typically worked for two or perhaps three landlords over the course of their adult lives, and at the time of

interviewing had usually worked for their present landlord for a period of several years. In some cases, they have worked for the same landowner or for the same landowning family throughout their lives, while in other cases the family has sharecropped the same piece of land across generations while ownership has passed from one landlord to another through market sale. Landlords are typically engaged in some other form of employment or business away from the plain and in urban centres or cities – though a few landlord families also have a stake in local agribusiness and participate in local and regional commerce. Tenancy agreements on the plain are made and renewed over many years on the basis of verbal contracts. Prospective landlords and tenants verbally agree to enter into sharecropping arrangements at the beginning of the season, and they are renewed tacitly, season after season, until one or both of the parties ends the arrangement.

The landlord-tenant structure in the context of sharecropping comprises a set of internally related objects organised around land, labour and rent, as indicated in Figure 9. The structure is also the basis of a number of powers and liabilities for landlords (Table 12). Through the landlord-tenant structure, landlords acquire access to labour power for making their land productive and from which they can extract surplus in the form of rent. Tenants meanwhile acquire access to land and other productive resources through which they can produce and generate incomes. The structure also leaves landlords and tenants at exposed to particular liabilities which are identified in the table. Landlords and tenants are both exposed to production risks, such as the outbreak of a crop disease, and its costs while tenants are exposed to the mechanisms of surplus extraction and the loss of tenure.
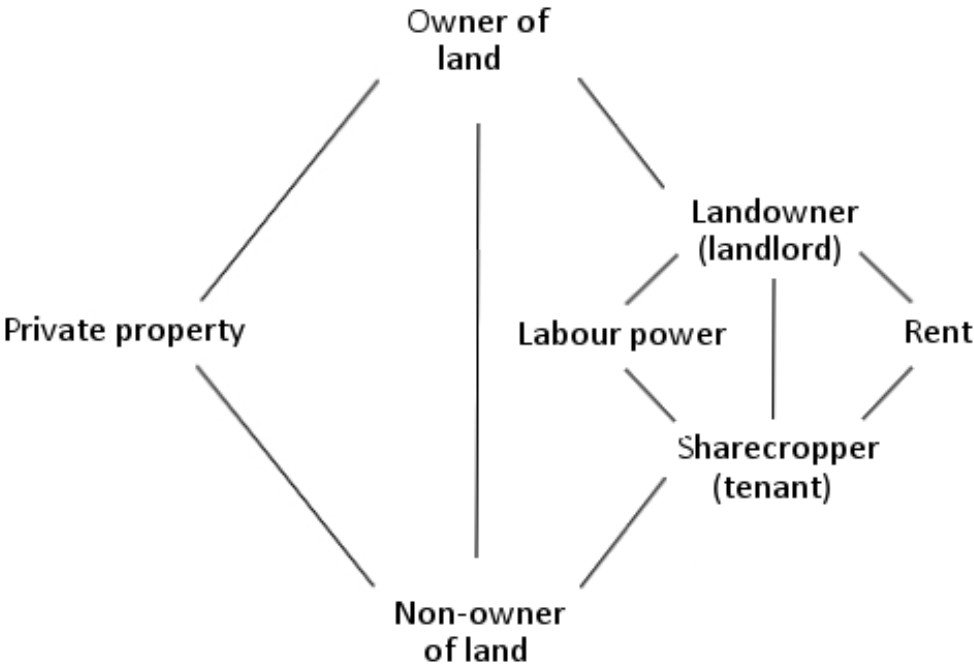
Figure 9. Landlord-tenant structure. Lines between objects indicate that they are internally related.

	Landlords	Tenants
Powers	Hire and fire; Impose sanctions; Acquire access to labour power; Make their land productive; Extract rent; Make key decisions about growing;	Access and use land; Acquire access to other productive resources via credit (landlord reputation); Grow/produce/work to generate incomes later on
Liabilities	Exposure to production risks; Pilfering, 'everyday' resistance	Exposed to surplus extraction; Exposure to production risks; Tenure loss

Table 12. Powers and liabilities in the landlord-tenant structure

7.1.2   Variations in tenure contracts

These invariant features underlie the diversity of tenure contracts, characterised by subtle differences from each to the next. These variations do not alter the landlord-tenant structure in any significant way, though they may mean that tenancy is be experienced differently and 'exploitation' perceived as a matter of degree. The contribution of land or labour power by one or the other party on the plain takes place on the basis of a claim by each to 50 percent of the crop yield or its value equivalent on the market. These divisions are made at the end of the season, once the crops have been harvested or once they have been exchanged for cash. When claims to a division of the crop is made, this means each party intends to realise the crop's value in different ways or at different times. For instance, landlords may want to put their share of peanuts into storage at the end of the season and wait for prices to rise, while tenants may need to sell them immediately after harvest to buy food or pay off an outstanding debt. Though distribution of the crop or its money equivalent was always described by research participants as based on an equal 50:50 split, additional labour, and costs and levies applied over the course of production would suggest some erosion to the 50:50 division in the landlord's favour, as indicated by the distribution of farming costs across various types of tenure arrangement (Table 13). The costs of the required farming inputs, such as fertilisers and pesticides, and new equipment purchased from private sector suppliers on the plain (section 7.2 below) are also shared between landlord and tenant on a 50:50 basis.

Variations in tenure contracts are outlined here and illustrated in Table 13. A breakdown of the research participants and their tenure types are shown in Appendix 6a. The first variation has to do with the costs involved in preparing the land. Land preparation is always undertaken by sharecroppers on the plain at the beginning of the season for providing optimal soil conditions that maximise the chances of obtaining a good harvest. It involves hiring agricultural workers and bringing them to the farm, removing weeds and stones, preparing irrigation channels, wells and pools, and hiring machine services such as the plough.

Depending on the crop in question, the land may need to be ploughed more than once, as well as require a host of other preparatory activities. In almost every case, participants carry complete responsibility for preparing the land, including the financial costs associated with it. Landlords generally make no contribution to preparing the land, either financially or through their labour, though research participants reported landlords would occasionally lend them money for preparing the land, for consumption, or for farming expenses over the course of the season. If landlords have lent money during the season, they will deduct the amount owed from the net income at the end. Exceptions to the more common practice of having the tenant bear the full costs of land preparation involve landlords sharing initial costs on a 50:50 basis. These costs might be reclaimed later on through other clauses in the contract however, such as through sharecropper's provision of additional labour or landlords' entitlement to a further 10 percent of the total or net income.

While landlords therefore make little or no contribution to the first stages of cultivation, they do contribute towards the end of the season, once the crop is nearly ready to be harvested. In every case, research participants reported landlords sharing with them the financial costs of harvesting, and doing so on a 50:50 basis. These costs are multiple, and can include hiring daily farmworkers and transport costs for getting the harvest from the farm to the collection centres. In light of the potential for bad weather, crop failure or plant diseases over the course of the season, the arrangement is more convenient for landlords: any losses made on the initial investment for preparing the land is carried by the sharecropping family, while the landowner stands to gain from the initial investment though having taken on a lower share of the overall risk and having done little or none of the work.

Another variation, already mentioned, has to do with the presence or absence of a 10 percent claim made by landlords to the overall income or net income. Much like the *gawaam* tenancies of the 1970s, the claim is made by landlords when tenants bring fewer assets to the farm, namely equipment, and when they do not share the costs of maintaining existing equipment or fully preparing the land. The implication for landlords is that they are required to pick up some of these costs in full or in part. This was the case for one of the research participants only, Mariam (Type D in Table 13), who described having her landlord contribute to the costs of preparing the land but having to cede to him 10% of the overall income – a much higher figure than the net because it does not take into account farming costs. Though this occurred in only a single case, other research participants described how their landlords had in the past taken a 10 percent cut from either themselves or their parents when they were sharecroppers. This 10 percent claim continues to be practiced on the plain, but the general view is that it is archaic, becoming less common, and something that can be increasingly negotiated over.

	Type A	Type B	Type C	Type D
Sharecropper costs and expenses				
50% of harvest (net income or crop)	X	X	X	X
50% of harvest costs	X	X	X	X
50% of inputs (fertilizers, seedlings etc.)	X	X	X	X
10% of total income or net income	-	-	-	X
100% of land preparation costs	X	X	50%	50%
50% of equipment/maintenance costs	X	X	X	-
100% of electricity and water costs (irrigation)	X	50%	X	X

Table 13. Variations in tenure arrangements in terms of the distribution of costs. 'X' indicates where the tenants pay the share in full while '-' indicates where tenants pay nothing. Costs and expenses that are shaded are constant across all tenancy arrangements while the unshaded parts are variable.

A final variation in tenancy contracts concerns electricity and water payments – or irrigation costs. Much like with preparing the land, the majority of sharecroppers bear the burden of these costs, with the remaining cases having electricity shared on a 50:50 basis with landlords. Though household electricity and agricultural electricity are run on separate metres, none of the electricity costs were picked up in their entirety by landlords themselves. Electricity and water are typically considered together in light of their dual importance for keeping the land irrigated, but concrete data about the division of water costs is thin largely because of the sensitivity of the topic. Farmers of all sizes usually depend on groundwater tapped from wells on the land, but the declining water table on the plain means some of these wells have been built deeper than the legal limit. While they might not pay rates on the water obtained through wells, their construction nevertheless carries investment risks and considerable financial costs. An exception of where water costs were more openly discussed was in the areas around Echraf, where a water association provides legal access to association members through a rates payment system.

7.1.3 Class interests

As others have shown in respect to sharecropping, class disputes between landlords and tenants are mostly around matters of distribution rather than production, such as is the case in wage labour. Sharecroppers and landlords have a common interest in maximising their output but may disagree or consider unjust the way that output is distributed. Tenants will tend to prefer retaining a greater share of their surplus while landlords will look to maintain or enhance their appropriation of surplus labour. The reasons landlords and tenants have for engaging in these relations is different: tenants depend on sharecropping as the main source of income for supporting themselves and their families, and they expect these sharecropping arrangements to continue allowing them to do this. For landlords, sharecropping is a matter of

putting existing assets, namely land, to use for generating an additional income stream alongside what they already have. As Karim explained:

> *Landowners have their own properties and you live from them. The landowner has an alternative income, he doesn't live from* [the land]. *But for us, the sharecroppers, we carry all the responsibilities, as I told you. The workers you bring for planting seeds you pay for from your own pocket, and if a catastrophe happens… for him* [the landlord] *it's fine, but for you – what are you going to live on? If, God forbid, the… some people have farms but they have another income, for example they work in a bank, or as a teacher or, I don't know… he has another income and about the income of the farm, he doesn't care. But for us, no, we live from it. Whether there's good income or a bad income you have to deal with it. Some people* [are owing] *credit for many years* […] *Of course, the sharecropper has more problems than the landlord because the sharecropper doesn't have another income. He lives from* [the land]. *If he gets a good profit he would enjoy it, and if he gets a*[n income] *in the middle he would* [have to] *borrow money and this is it. The farmer is going to* [have to] *pay. To* [be able to] *build apartments? It's not true…from agriculture it's impossible. We aren't talking here about big farmers who own thousands of hectares, we're speaking of farmers who have 3 or 4 hectares* (interview with Karim).

Landlords look for disciplined tenants who can generate surpluses and from whom they can acquire rent at minimum expense (transaction costs) to themselves. Our research participants also noted that landowners look for labourers whom they can trust not to pilfer the crop or to understate its value from market sale – both classic examples of 'everyday resistance' which erodes what landlords are able to obtain from the harvest (Scott, 1985; 2013; Kerkvliet, 2002; 2005; 2009). Contrariwise, tenants look for landlords with whom they can negotiate and bargain with over the nuances of the tenancy arrangement and from whom they might be able to secure more favourable terms. Tenants will push for landlords to put more of their resources at their disposal without the latter claiming a larger share of the seasonal surplus. These resources identified by research participants include raw materials, financial resources, and also the landlord's time and knowledge. "Good" landlords were identified by tenants as ones who engaged in acts of generosity, such as sharing a chicken with their subordinates, and landlords who are charitable and display care. Despite these contingent variations, the invariant elements show that the landlord-tenant structure across cases remains essentially the same.

A limited negotiating and bargaining space

Variations in the terms of landlord-tenant contracts are outcomes of negotiations and bargaining between the two parties but these take place in the context of differential power. At its most basic, these power asymmetries are revealed in the vocabulary of tenants, who occasionally referred to their landlords as the 'boss' or the 'big boss' over the course interviewing. What makes landlords the boss, for tenants, is the various powers they retain by virtue of landownership and tenants' need for work. Landlords have powers to hire labour and evict tenants, and to decide how the land should be used. As we will see in the following section, they also have powers to secure from suppliers the additional factors of production (besides land) which tenants on their own cannot secure but which they nevertheless depend on.

Key decisions around which crops to grow and the about the area of land to dedicate to those crops remain the purview of landlords. These decisions are of importance to tenants because they shape the trajectory of the agricultural year and pattern household incomes. Whether more emphasis is placed on one crop or another, or whether land is left fallow for instance affects how household incomes are obtained, shaping the timing of those incomes and expectations about how much the household will get at the close of the season. In addition, shifts in prices of agricultural commodities in the domestic market, as responses to changes in supply,[69] mean that some decisions about how to use the land may be prospectively or retrospectively better or worse. For instance, research participants who had planted a larger acreage of potatoes earlier in 2015 could benefit from unusually high potato prices that were reportedly pushed up by flood damage to crops in parts of the Jendouba governorate, northeast Tunisia. During interviews, tenants would initially maintain that such decisions were "taken together" between landlords and tenants, but further questioning revealed that the space for tenants was more usually more limited to volunteering opinions and making suggestions, with landlords ultimately having the final say.[70] Major decision-making aside, sharecroppers run the farms as their own, making day-to-day decisions, organising labour, and procuring and transporting inputs and dealing with suppliers and buyers.

Landlords also have the choice about who their tenant is, and tenants know that landlords have powers to evict them from the land and without notice. They can also impose arbitrary

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[69] Supply is unpredictable in Tunisia largely due to natural constraints and climate, especially rainfall, and supply-demand instability results in instability in prices and quantities of products sold (AfDB, 2012a).

[70] The same sort of response was found when asking women and men about gender divisions of labour. Both male and female participants would claim that men and women did everything together and responsibility was shared, but we know in actual fact that divisions of labour are highly gendered. These responses echo Bernstein's (1992) observation that rural people tend to describe such matters in terms of how they ideally should be rather than how they in fact are.

sanctions on top of eviction, such as the confiscation of tenants' share of the crops and livestock. The verbal nature of tenure contracts and their informal character makes it easier for landlords to exercise those powers if they choose to. On occasion, research participants would recount incidents from the past about when they were evicted from the land without receiving a share of the crop or income from the landlord and without financial or practical means to legal recourse. Khalil for example narrated what had happened while working as a tenant for a different landlord a number of years earlier. After being evicted and receiving nothing from the landlord, he went to report to the police station:

> *Honestly, this happened before the Revolution, in the times of Ben Ali. At the time I went to complain. I complained in El Haouaria, in the police office in El Haouaria. I went to complain and the director of the office at that time said to me: 'Let me tell you something', when I narrated my story, he said, 'Don't complain* […] *You do not have any* [written] *proof and your complaining is pointless'* […] *He tells me it's better not to complain, and complaining to God is good enough.*

When Adel, another sharecropper, described a similar situation that had happened to him we asked whether he had sought legal redress:

> *I don't have money to go to a lawyer. How can I get money* [to pay] *for one? I left the farm without having money to buy bread. How can I get money for a lawyer?* [The landlord] *is a lawyer, and his son is as well. And if you try to speak out you won't enjoy your rights. I'm going to give you an example. Is it the same to walk with shoes on thistles as it is for someone who doesn't wear shoes? No, it's not the same. There's a difference between someone who drives a car and someone who walks. It's not the same. He's got money and power and… but me, I've got nothing.*

As already mentioned, sharecroppers know that the loss of land and the lack of an alternative tenancy agreement usually means a reduction to salaried farm work, at least until they can find a new landlord. Access to good land on the plain for sharecropping is reportedly difficult to come by, while potential landlords can count on a supply of prospective tenants from among the peninsula's landless and unemployed. What space there is for negotiation and bargaining over the terms of the exchange defined by a range of negotiating points considered socially acceptable and legitimate to discuss. Tenants' mobilisation of their existing capital and provision of additional labour has already been mentioned, but others have to do with the quality and quantity of landholder's assets: the fertility and size of their landholdings, their location, the type of crops that can be grown in the soil, and access to water. Variations among these and expectations about how they should affect incomes shape negotiations over the contracts and their nuances. Outside of these sets of factors lie other priorities held by tenants

but these are not put up for negotiation with landowners. Tenants know that if they raise such matters, or even push too strongly on those which are considered acceptable, landlords may respond by hiring someone else. The extent of landowners' control over negotiation and bargaining is illustrated by the example of social insurance, a matter of importance to sharecroppers. Tenants are eligible for a national social insurance scheme which requires regular contributions over the course of many years in exchange for a pension once they reach old age. Most sharecroppers have never contributed and have raised this as a concern and a priority. When we asked during a family interview whether research participants received a pension, Raouf replied, "if you tell him [the landowner] he should pay your insurance he would tell you you're sacked, you can stop" (Raouf, interview with Amir, Raouf, Houda and Abdou). Houssem's response similarly shows how the topic of social insurance is one which falls outside the boundaries of the accepted negotiating and bargaining space, irrespective even of what the law says about it:

> *Interviewer: Why* [do you think it is] *impossible for the landowner to provide a pension?*
>
> *Houssem: He won't give one, I don't know. I don't know whether the law says that he should provide one or not. And if you tell him he would tell you to leave his land…*

Thus far, treatment has only been given to the relation between landlords and tenants in the appropriation of seasonal surpluses. The picture is incomplete because, as we will see in the next section, the landlord-tenant structure is hooked onto other structures that exposes tenants to further claims on their surpluses.

7.2 Suppliers and farmers

7.2.1 Access to other productive resources

If landowners supply the land and sharecroppers supply the labour, the remaining productive resources, such as equipment, seeds and other agricultural inputs, are bought by both landlords and tenants from private sector suppliers on the plain. These resources are made available to farmers on the plain through suppliers, but not in a manner that makes them a party to the enterprise, such as when landlords supply land and its resources and share with tenants a part of the production costs and risks. Rather, suppliers procure and import agricultural inputs and equipment which landlords and tenants are required to purchase as commodities through cash or credit. The supplier-farmer relation constitutes a structure in its own right that is distinct from the landlord-tenant structure described above (Figure 10) but with which it nevertheless

is connected.[71] Like the landlord-tenant structure, this structure is also the basis of a particular set of powers and liabilities (Table 14).

Among the productive resources acquired from suppliers include irrigation equipment such as tubes and motors; fertilisers, which are mostly produced by Tunisian national industries with materials sourced in the mining regions in the south of the country; and various types of treatments and pesticides. They also include a range of hybrid seeds, usually imported, to meet production rhythms and crop specification requirements of local agri-food processors and markets. The main cultures - tomato, potato and chili pepper - which are also industrial cultures, are organised mostly around these hybrid seeds (Interprofessional Group for Legumes, 2016), requiring specific and heavy use of crop protection products. The market for crop protection products such as insecticides, fungicides, and seeds for gardening crops and legumes is mainly composed of these imported products (FAO 2013a; Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, 2009).
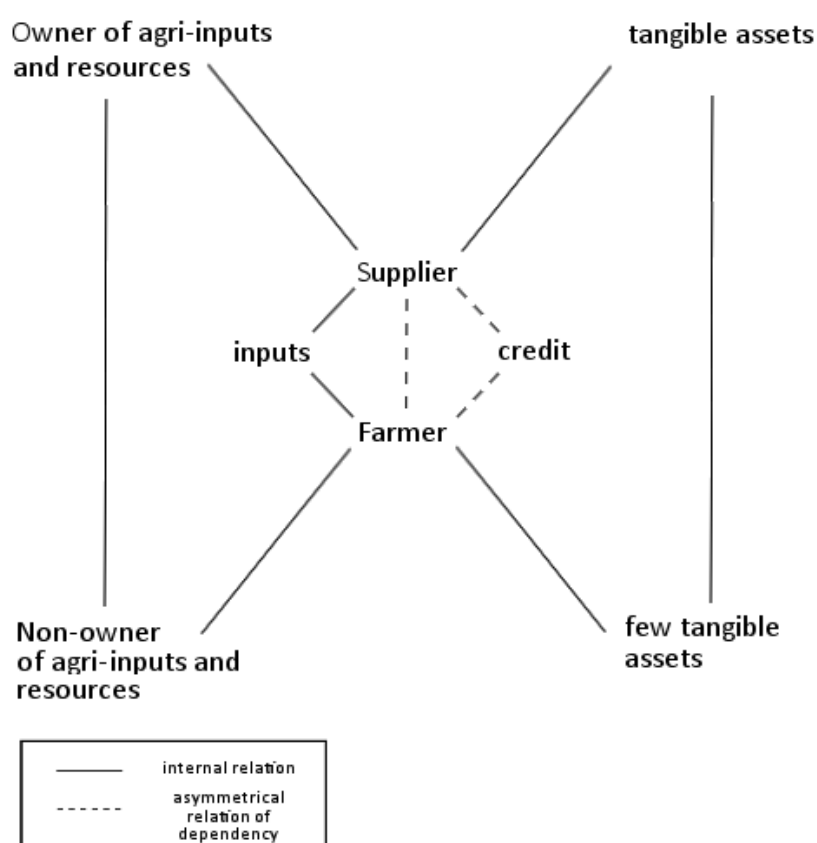
Figure 10. Supplier-farmer structure.

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[71] I refer to 'farmers' rather than 'sharecroppers' when discussing relations with suppliers and processors for reasons of conceptual clarity. While sharecroppers and their needs remain the object of study, small and medium farming households also enter into the same relations with suppliers and processors, and hence these structures are not sharecropping-dependent.

	Suppliers	(Tenant) farmers
Powers	Provision inputs and equipment; Set prices; Impose borrowing terms; Award credit; Regulate credit relation	Acquire access to productive; resources (cash or credit)
Liabilities	Lending risks; Lending costs; Supervision costs; Delayed repayments; Non-repayment;	Interest payments; Subject to borrowing terms; Subject to regulation; Marginalisation from the credit market; Exclusion from the credit market; Financial risks

Table 14. Powers and liabilities in the farmer-supplier structure.

Background information on the suppliers is thin, but the most significant among them are agri-input importing enterprises with access to agricultural processing facilities, and subsidiary companies of large agribusiness industries. These business interests control both the upstream distribution of agricultural inputs and equipment on the plain and a share of the downstream activities of storage, processing, and marketing. Specifically, the agri-input importing companies also control a number of potato storage facilities on the plain for absorbing potato cultures while the agri-food industries which process tomatoes, chili peppers and other conserves have their own nurseries that supply farmers with seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and equipment on the basis of informal contracts and credit. This control of both upstream and downstream activities by single enterprises is nothing new on the plain as farmers have been supplied with inputs and equipment in exchange for crop deliveries for decades, as described in Chapter 5. New businesses have however sprung up however in recent years alongside an expansion of other cultures, notably the potato.

Farmers are aware of the connections between and interests of local importers, suppliers and industries. They are also aware of their own dependence on these actors and recognise how these actors profit from agriculture and from their produce. When farmers refer to their interactions with these suppliers, they tend to use the surnames of the business directors whom they have normally never met rather than the company names. In several cases, multiple businesses providing different services are led by different members of the same family, and so particular surnames reappeared over the course of the interviews. These businesses are the only source of finance for poor farmers on the plain, and almost all seasonal purchases are made through credit which they supply:

> *We have four powerful men who dominate all farmers. They own the nurseries, the treatment companies, and brought nurseries* [to the area]. *The financing of farmers*

by those men is based on credit and blank cheques, and they don't care about [the farmers] *because they know they'll be paid in the end* […] *now the private sector is dominating everything. This is what is affecting farmers in a bad way* (Interview with Ahmed).

The supplier-farmer relation, as Ahmed indicates, is the basis of debt as another mode of exploitation. With few tangible assets, farmers are in a position of needing to regularly borrow from suppliers for access to the remaining productive resources but they are subject to high rates of interest on their debts. The terms and conditions of borrowing are shaped by the suppliers, and debts can extend over multiple seasons and interest rate rises when borrowers cannot repay on time. Farmer compliance is encouraged by supplier incentives for client loyalty and enforced by the imposition of borrowing terms and regulations.

7.2.2   Informal credit

For a single seasonal culture production costs will usually amount to some several thousand Tunisian dinars depending on the culture and the area of land allocated to it. There are various obstacles farmers in Tunisia face accessing formal credit to cover those production costs, even if they have guarantees. On the plain, sharecroppers fail to meet the minimum requirements for formal credit because they lack ownership of agricultural land or sufficient property that can be used as a guarantee.[72] As discussed in Chapter 5, even if they were to meet these requirements as smallholders it is unlikely they would have access and none of the research participants reported their landlords acquiring access to formal credit on their behalf.[73] This leaves the formal credit sector effectively closed off to them, with only informal supplier channels remaining as the routes through which credit can be secured. There are far fewer obstacles to obtaining this form of credit, but it means that sharecroppers are located in relations of dependency vis-à-vis private sector suppliers. Multiple seasonal cultures and the lack of access to formal finance makes these debt relations successive and a recurring, permanent feature of their livelihood practices. This resort to suppliers for seasonal credit means everything borrowed by tenants comes from the informal sector – suppliers for seasonal credit, but also friends, family, landlords and even grocery shops to help meet production and consumption needs and costs.

Sharecroppers and small farmers are located in similar debt relations with suppliers on the plain and voice similar grievances about those relations, but the nature of their relations is different. The small farmers we interviewed acquire credit themselves and are responsible alone for paying it back, while in sharecropping the costs are shared with landlords. Acquiring

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[72] Crop insurance is another condition for formal credit but few farmers on the plain can afford it.
[73] According to Wassel, seasonal loans exist but he is unable to acquire one because his landlord does not want to take on any of the risk associated with it (Interview with Wassel and Nawres).

access to inputs, seeds and equipment by credit depends on the presence of a landlord who brings to bear their reputation and land as a form of security for the creditor. As Abdou explained:

> *Because, even sometimes the supplier doesn't give the materials to me through credit, because I do not have anything. He may tell me I'll trick him. So he gives it to the landlord because he has the land. 'If there's a problem the landlord can sell a part of the land and pay me'* [the supplier says to the tenant]. *If you are going to buy thousands worth in credit, why would he give it to me when I don't have anything? So the priority is to the owner of the land, he gives it to him.*

When inputs and equipment are acquired this way, suppliers have both tenant and landlord put their names to the credit by having them sign the agreement together. And unlike small farmers who bear 100% of the costs, the landlord-tenant contract stipulates a 50:50 division of input and equipment costs between the two parties. This form of credit arrangement was the case for all of the known credit arrangements of tenant research participants.[74] In the event of default, tenants draw on their resources such as livestock, equipment, or even mortgaging their own homes for paying off outstanding debts.

The 'kimbyel' and the debt relation

Debt relations are reproduced when farmers are provisioned with seasonal inputs and equipment on the basis of informal lending, and on terms suppliers themselves largely set. This relation is formally represented by an oral agreement and by suppliers having farmers sign a type of cheque called a *kimbyel* – though 'trustworthy' clients may be rewarded by not needing to sign one. The way the *kimbyel* works is as follows. Towards the beginning of the season, tenants (and landlords) will approach the supplier to acquire the necessary inputs and equipment for the culture in question. The supplier will draw up a list of items and their cost, and set a repayment date, usually at the end of the season. The farmer collects the *kimbyel* from the supplier in question and takes it to the municipal building along with a copy of their identity card for verifying the signature. The *kimbyel* is then returned to the supplier. If more

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[74] There was a single exception, Rania, who described how she was growing only a single culture of chili pepper that year, and planned to use its seeds for the following year. In the past she and her family had resorted to informal credit for growing a variety of cultures, but had now resolved to avoid it completely because they found it "exploitative" (interview with Rania). As a 'marginal farmer', Rania and her husband are likely have another, more significant source of income. Rania is in her 30s and has been in and out of the labour market in recent years. While most crops on the plain grown by tenants on the plain are on the basis of credit, some cultures are occasionally paid for with cash. When this happens, it normally means that landlords have acquired the necessary inputs and equipment on behalf of their tenants at the beginning of the season through cash purchases, and both would later share those costs on a 50:50 basis at the end of the season. In this respect, these cultures are less costly and risky for tenants because while they are not insulated from rising input and equipment costs associated with the culture, they are insulated from the usurious behaviour of suppliers.

items need to be procured through credit, such as treatments, these are added to the list of items for repayment. Depending on the arrangement, suppliers anticipate that the amount owed will be returned in cash or in kind at the end of the season. In paying off existing debts, what matters to farmers as much as the value of the debt is the amount of time they are given for making repayments. If the income from harvesting a particular culture does not cover the costs of production, farmers are faced with having to either sell off exiting assets or look for extensions to the repayment dates so that incomes from subsequent seasons can be used to service earlier debts. By signing a *kimbyel,* both debtor and creditor anticipate in advance that repayments may not be made on time and that the recovery of debts might therefore take longer than originally anticipated. The *kimbyel* allows successive extensions to be made to the repayment deadline, albeit at the discretion of the creditor and with accruing financial and social penalties, as discussed below.

Borrowing terms and regulation

Suppliers retain powers to lend or to withhold lending to clients, and to lend for some cultures and not for others. They also have powers to shape the borrowing terms according to whom their client is, meaning that borrowing arrangements on the plain is highly personalised. The one-sided dependency implied in the debt relation means that farmers have little control over the borrowing terms, either when the agreement is being drawn up at the beginning of the season or at the end of the season when repayments are due. As described in chapter 6, research participants were resolute that the space for speaking, negotiating and bargaining for improvements to input prices and borrowing terms is minimal, and they can at most negotiate for extensions to the repayment deadlines – which come at higher financial costs to themselves. When Khaled, an old sharecropper in Haretchara, was asked during the interview whether there were better or worse suppliers on the plain, he explained it as a matter of wealth and status:

> *He thinks that whether you have a good supplier or a bad supplier depends on how much money you have. If you have money they'll respect you but if you don't have any you'll work and buy in the way they decide. He feels he's working as a servant for them, as though he's being exploited* (Interpreter's summary of interview with Khaled).

On the matter of product prices, farmers have no space at all for negotiation and bargaining. When farmers are given credit, they are required buy items at the prices set by suppliers - items which are sold for profit and at prices slightly elevated above the same items bought with cash.

Suppliers also retain powers to reward favourable clients. Tenants and other farmers who have dealt with the same suppliers over the course of many years are rewarded for their loyalty by obtaining credit through oral agreements and without having to sign a *kimbyel*. Oral agreements signify that the relationship has been profitable to the supplier insofar as the farmer has been a regular and reliable client. It also appears a signifier of status. Though the financial terms remain largely the same as those involving a *kimbyel,* farmers may enjoy more flexibility in negotiating over repayments and in decision-making about what happens to the crop after harvest. Khalil, a former sharecropper who had recently moved to renting, explained how "trust" is built between farmer and supplier and that only a minority of farmers can obtain credit through trust:

> *Interviewer: Does it take a long time to build trust* [with the supplier]*?*
>
> *Khalil: Look what they do, they, the ancestors, they said that everyone has his devil in his pocket* [everyone thinks about their own interests first]. *[…] But what does* [the supplier] *do? He gives you the first year, he gives you a few things. It was the same when I started. For example, I started with a single supplier. I worked with all the suppliers. How did I work? I took things from only one supplier. I dealt with him for about 15 or 20 years. Since he opened I've been dealing with him. Since he started working I've dealt with him. What does he do? The first year he gives you something, gives you something, like an experience. He experiences what you are like and he gives you* [things] *and provides for you, and looks at how you deal with him. I deal with him and thanks to God I don't have any problems.* [Now] *I take whatever I want from him.*
>
> *Interviewer: But for the other farmers who buy without signing a check, does it take a long time?*
>
> *Khalil: No, they do not give it to anyone. Just a few people from Dar Allouche or Haretchara, or from here to Menzel Tamim,* [city of] *Nabeul and Korba can take it* [without signing]. *Kimbyel or cheques, and some of them mortgage their farm. They give and deal with people who… they know that some people don't pay. Did you understand?*

As Khalil also indicates, suppliers expect their clients to regularly return to them for their farming needs rather than go to other suppliers, even if prices are preferable elsewhere. Procuring inputs and equipment from another supplier risks damaging farmers' loyalty and the "trust" of the existing supplier, and it puts in jeopardy the possibility of securing future credit and benefits. Lotfi, a research participant who was particularly infuriated by the way he was being treated by the suppliers, remarked that "if you don't buy [everything] from him [the

supplier] he'd never give it to you again. You have to take everything from him" (interview with Lotfi). Positions of dependency leave farmers with little choice but to work towards cultivating long term and amicable relations, or "trust", with a single creditor for the possibility of securing more favourable borrowing terms. Tenants such as Khalil who occupy similar positions must continue to work and borrow with the aim of preserving those relations. What is important to note is that what is implied by "trust" between suppliers and farmers occurs in a context infused with suspicion and differential power. As Gerber (2013, p.854) has noted in a different context, "trust" in this sense is a strategy and "not a solidarity value."

Besides rewards, compliance in the debt relation is enforced by other means. The threat of imprisonment, as we saw in the previous chapter, is one which is a source of stress to farmers though it is not common. More significant is prospect of spiralling debts and the danger of being marginalised or excluded from the credit market. Unlike formal creditors such as Tunisia's banks, suppliers do not have access to the Public Credit Registry. Individual farmers are ranked on a scale of reliability – 'he is a good farmer', 'he doesn't sign anything', 'he always pays off his debts', and so on. The very open character of social life on the plain and the fact people know one another at least by family name means that reputation can build and stick. Farmers in difficulties may be stigmatised over time by being labelled unreliable, or they may even earn reputations for dishonesty by misleading suppliers. Unreliable farmers include those that delay settling their debts, while dishonest or misleading farmers might include those who siphon off a part of their harvest to sell for better prices in spot markets instead of returning it in full to the supplier or processor. Suppliers and other lenders know who farmers are and they may apply more stringent conditions on borrowing for particular individuals, including by having them sign a kimbyel, or they may even close off opportunities for credit entirely. Farmers whose reputations have led to diminished "trust" between themselves and the suppliers can find themselves having to move between different suppliers in and around the plain, but also further afield into other delegations where their reputations do not follow them and where they might have more success procuring credit.

Rising prices, high interest

Farmers must work toward obtaining a value of production that exceeds their debt, which mainly consists of input and equipment costs and interest. Sharecroppers must also work to secure rent for their landlords. Though generally speaking credit remains a fundamental means for supporting commodity production in agriculture, both input prices and the interest levied on debts are viewed by farmers on the plain as draining away their resources and hoovering up their incomes. Recalling the input intensity of agricultural production on the plain, interest paid on informal credit and returns to suppliers must be understood in the context of rising input costs in Tunisia in recent years which has driven up the costs of production. The reasons

for higher input costs are mostly to do with internal supply problems after the Revolution in the case of fertilisers, and a depreciation in the value of the Tunisian dinar which has increased the cost of imported products. In a context where these imported inputs receive little or no government subsidies, farmers who depend on them have had to foot the bill[75] as well as the explicit interest levied on them.[76] Since the seeds are hybrids, farmers cannot reuse them and must return to the suppliers at the beginning of the season to buy new seeds or seedlings and their treatments.[77] Of the main cultures on the plain, only peanut cultures are grown with Tunisian seeds and this culture does not undergo any processing. Peanut seed can be stored and reused, and they require relatively little or no chemical treatments or fertilisers.

As farmers are required to obtain these inputs through credit, they are increasingly burdened by the interest levied on their debts. Though the standard rate of 10 percent has remained constant over the years, the amount that farmers must pay in interest has risen in line with rising costs. These amounts are viewed by research participants as too high given their low returns. Objectively, a rate of 10 percent is also high given that bank interest levied on formal agricultural credit is lower, ranging from 5-10 percent,[78] and since critical studies of smallholder finance have generally concluded that even microfinance "is not an appropriate source of investment" for farmers for whom it is the main source of agricultural finance, nor is it "in itself a cure for poverty" (Harper, 2012, p.573; Also Taylor, 2012). Debts can begin to spiral, as Amir explained:

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[75] Helmi's description is typical: "It was better in the past. Low prices. When you took 'mina' and 'moniter' and treatments you got them for the cheapest of prices. And the same for potato seed. It was cheap. And we sold them for good prices […] And we would import the seeds from abroad and we plant them. We used to earn well. When we sold the product the prices [per kg] did not pass 300-350 millimes. But the materials were cheap and 1000 kg of potato seeds used to cost 700 dinars. The fertilizers and the manure were cheap which helped us. Now a trailer costs 100 dinars. Now a bag of 100 kg of DAP costs about 57 dinars and the same for 'moniter' - it is expensive. The treatment box which used to cost 7 dinars we now buy for 20 dinars, and it contains a small quantity which can't do anything. The materials have become so expensive" (interview with Helmi and Salma).

[76] Also included in these input costs are the royalties or 'monopoly rents' which pass from farmers through local suppliers to the to the multinational agribusiness corporations in European countries and elsewhere from whom they are sourced.

[77] Traditional practices of saving the present season's seed for sowing the following year is fraught with risk since genetic changes between hybrid plant parent and offspring mean the quality and yield of the crop will likely be compromised (Key informant 1, Appendix 6b). Farmers on the plain appear unaware of this, and believe they have been sold 'sick' seeds. Ghassen for instance explained, "For example, when they bring us potato seed… they're cheated [fraudulent]. They produce for only one year, then stop. The seeds they bring are weak and cheated […] In the past we retained tomato seeds and we used them for 7 or 8 years. It was the same. The same for peppers. But now they don't produce [anymore]".

[78] Interest rates for seasonal loans at the National Agriculture Bank are calculated using the 'money market rate' (Taux du Marché Monétaire) set by the Tunisian Central Bank, presently around 4%, plus a bank mark-up of up to 5% per annum (World Bank, 2012; National Agriculture Bank, 2016; Tunisian Central Bank, 2016). The national microfinance bank for small enterprises lends at even lower interest, at 5% per annum (World Bank, 2012).

When you go to buy a treatment with cash you can negotiate with him. For 20 dinars the supplier gets at least 10 dinars' profit. He gets it for 10 dinars and sells it for 20 dinars. If you buy with credit he adds 10 percent interest to the 20 dinars. And if you don't pay at the exact time he adds more interest. With the credit system, farmers are drowning. […] You agree with him that he'll provide you with the materials and treatments between May, June, July and August. He tells you that you should pay him in September with 10 percent interest. If you don't pay in September, in October it becomes 15 percent interest. If you don't pay in November it becomes 20 percent interest. Imagine for example that you bought 100 dinars' worth of treatments – you would pay 120 dinars. And this is nothing. Because you aren't buying 100 dinars [worth of items] *but 10,000. So you will pay 12,000 dinars. When you give him 12,000 back he has 6,000 profit* (interview with Amir, Raouf, Houda and Nassim).

Another tenant, Bilel, reported paying an even higher rate of interest at 100% the original item price (interview with Bilel), though generally interest was reported to be lower. Interest on debt, as an income generating activity of suppliers on the plain, constitutes a portion of surplus value extracted by suppliers from farmers. Amounts claimed in interest can grow over time as repayments deadlines cannot be met, and debts are carried over into subsequent seasons. As a result, sharecroppers are often faced with having to surrender to the supplier or processor more from their value share of the season's harvest in order to pay back past debts and the interest levied on them.

So far, debt has been considered only in terms of the role of interest in allowing private sector suppliers to obtain unearned incomes from farming. A more complete picture of the role of debt comes through an examination of the output side of production, which brings together farmers, suppliers, agri-food processors and storage bodies into a more complex set of relations. Here, debt (or 'credit' from the point of view of the lenders) is more than a method for obtaining unearned incomes through interest. It is also a leveraging instrument that allows the business interests controlling the agri-food processors and cooling and storage facilities to secure a share of production output for the purpose of profit-making.

7.3 Processors and farmers

7.3.1 Access to markets

This chapter has dealt with the input side of production in terms of land, labour and other resources that are required in order to produce. It has dealt with the key structures and relations that concern the activities upstream of agricultural production. This section deals with downstream activities on the plain, which are organised around two distinct pathways for farming output and debt service (Figures 11, 12 & 13). Each involves different destinations

for crops (Table 15). These pathways are complex and not fixed, and farmers are usually embedded in multiple pathways that vary between the crop in question, among the farmers themselves, and from one year to the next.

The first of these pathways involves farmers marketing the product themselves. Either they sell to a trader in agricultural goods at the end of the season or, less usually, act as a subcontractor for traders who purchase the crop in full. In the first case, traders arrive on the plain toward the end of the season with the aim of obtaining an amount of crop which can be transported and exchanged elsewhere in the country. They are taken around by an intermediary from farm to farm, where a purchase price is negotiated with farmers directly – or, in the case of sharecropping, with landlords and tenants. In the second case, traders agree in advance to buy the entire crop on a defined area of land, and may even supply some of the labour for harvesting. In either case, farmers receive a cash payment for the crop which they use for servicing debts to suppliers. This pathway is viewed more positively by research participants: it is associated with commodities for which it is easier to find buyers ('thicker' markets); it is not subject to arbitrary deductions through quality control; and it is associated with the chance to negotiate with traders. It also indicates greater "trust" from suppliers. It is also more likely to concern crops for which industries on the plain have little or no stake in, namely peanuts and winter vegetables, though it can often include crop surpluses left over after the value equivalent in kind has been claimed back by suppliers and processors (Pathway 2).

Figure 11. Pathways through which farmers' debts are serviced.

Product	Destination	Pathway
Tomatoes	Processors or traders	1 or 2
Potatoes	Processors (cooling and storage) or traders	1 or 2
Peppers	Processors or traders	1 or 2
Peanuts	Traders	1
Winter vegetables	Traders	1

Table 15. Crops grown by sharecroppers on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche Plain and their possible destinations. Wealthier farmers on the plain have additional options, such as hiring a vehicle to transport the crop to distant markets or taking it to the local market. Almost all sharecroppers and other small farmers interviewed tended to avoid these since transport costs, market fees and time spent make it unprofitable.

The second pathway amounts to a form of contract farming where farmers return the crop in kind to the processor associated with the supplier from whom credit was received (Figure 13). Its return is a formal condition of the credit arrangement. In such cases, title to the crop is effectively held by processors rather than by farmers, and the in-kind value is used to first service farmers' debts and to provide them with an income with whatever is left over. Unlike Pathway 1, this pathway concerns the key commodities on the plain which are destined for processing: tomatoes, potatoes and chili peppers. When these crops are eventually returned, their value is calculated according to fixed or market prices.[79] In the event processors absorb the entire crop, the debt amount is deducted from the overall crop value, and farmers receive whatever is left over. In the event processors refuse to accept a quantity of the crop above the debt value (such as in the event of alleged oversupply), research participants reported having to revert to Pathway 1 and look for an alternative market.
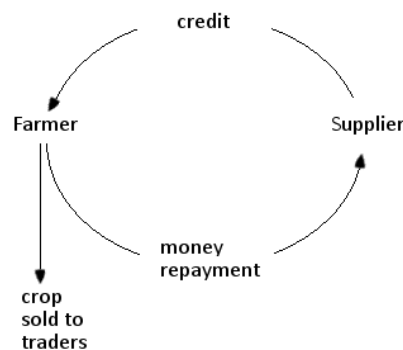
Figure 12. Illustration of Pathway 1
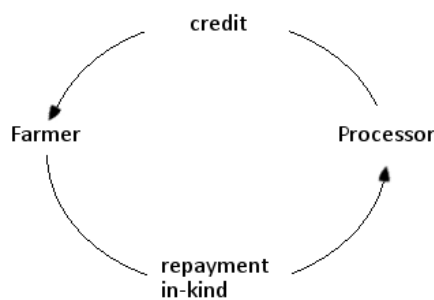
Figure 13. Illustration of Pathway 2.

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[79] Fixed prices are reserved for tomatoes and potatoes destined for processing and storage. At the time of fieldwork, prices for tomatoes and potatoes were 147 millimes/kg and 450 millimes/kg respectively.

7.3.2 Resource procurement

Processors exist in virtue of the profit-making imperatives of the industries to which they belong. They also enjoy state subsidies and support on account of their being strategically positioned as important economic units that contribute to the country's national food security goals.[80] Processors set the pace and rhythm of production and absorb farming output for storage or processing with the convenience of not needing to have directly engaged in production nor to have taken on production risks and associated financial risks. The nature of their engagement in production is, in effect, an indirect one: while production remains in the purview of landlords and their sharecropping tenants, as well as other landowning farmers on the plain, processors acquire indirect access to land and labour power through the downstream leveraging of inputs via credit and by the upstream control of the output market. Profit making counts on the procurement of farming output at specific times of the year, and either its storage or transformation into new products which acquire higher value over time or as they are moved along the commodity chain. The form of processing is commodity-specific. For tomatoes and chili pepper cultures, the crop is acquired as raw materials and subject to industrial technologies and processes that lead to the creation of new products (tomato concentrate and pastes, harissa and so on). For potatoes, industrial cooling and storage allows these commodities to enter the market at deferred dates, albeit without undergoing transformation into new products. These products are then passed along to other actors in the commodity chain, namely traders, wholesale retailers and exporters, before arriving onto the plates of consumers.

While the processor-farmer structure here hinges on credit, the supplier-farmer relation and the processor-farmer relation remain separate structures. In Pathway 1, the relation between both structures is a matter of externality since the buyer and lender are not one and the same. In Pathway 1, farmers on the plain can in principle grow through credit and realise the crop's value through open market exchanges. Where the buyer and the lender are the same, as in Pathway 2, it implies that both structures – and hence, the input and output sides of production – are internally related or interlinked (Figure 14). Suppliers fund production whose output is then absorbed by the processors for storage or transformation with which they are associated. In this way, the supplier-farmer structure and the farmer-processor structure are operating

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[80] Processing units for key crops are overwhelmingly concentrated in Nabeul governorate, where production is highest. There are far fewer units found in Tunisia's 23 other governorates. On the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain, tomato and chili pepper transformation is undertaken by 4 of the governorate's 14 units, while potatoes are managed by 4 private sector units out of a total of 7 at the governorate level (Appendix 4c).

together, with 'buyer credit' or debt functioning as an instrument that binds one part of the transaction to another. Ahmed describes pathway 1 in respect to the potato culture:

Those with money, the big farmers who have money, they buy everything with cash so they're not obliged to sign a kimbyel with the suppliers. He buys 1000 kg of potato seed with his money and after harvesting it he stores it under the olives trees or wherever he wants, and he also sells it whenever he wants. But the small farmers like the tenant farmers, you don't have 5,000 or 6,000 dinars to start the year [season] with. You go and take the materials from the suppliers after signing a kimbyel and the day you harvest the product he comes to you directly. He takes the product and you're obliged to sell it for 400 or 500 millimes. He takes the product as payment for the debt. When he takes the quantity that covers the debt and the debt is paid you can negotiate with him about the price… to sell him the rest of the product, store it or sell it at the price you want. Did you understand? Because you are dominated by them, because you are financially empty. This one of the things that really makes the… especially the tenant farmers suffer (Interview with Ahmed).
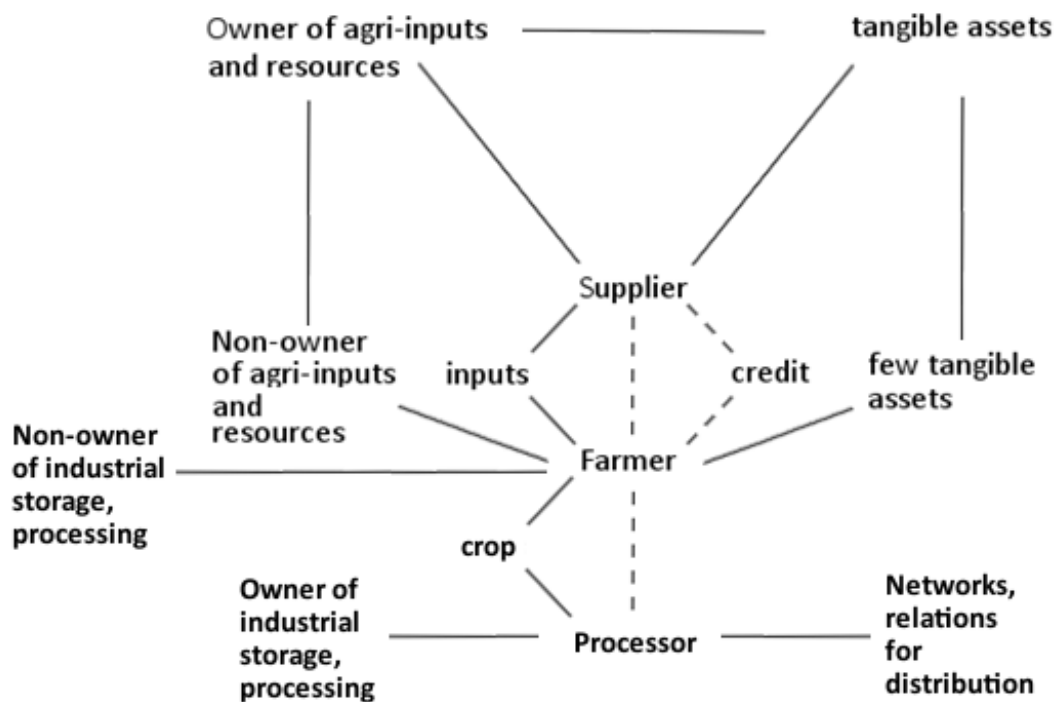
Figure 14. Interlinking structures: supplier-farmer, processor-farmer.

	Processors	**(Tenant) farmers**
Powers	Designate crop specifications and inputs Retain title to the crop; Buy crop; Refuse to buy crop; Impose quality selection; Transform or store crop; Avoid production risks; Access labour power; Sell/distribute processed product	Exchange crop for cash payment; Avoid market risks
Liabilities	Exposure to market risks; Processing costs; Side-selling	Loss of title to the crop; Loss of decision-making over production; Loss of decision-making over selling; Deferred payments; Contract breaking

Table 16. Powers and liabilities in the farmer-processor structure.

Much like with the landlord-tenant and supplier-farmer relations, the position of farmers in this system of output procurement and processing hinges on differential control over various assets. The need for credit, as already discussed, hinges on farmers' lack of tangible assets, while the business interests managing the processors enjoy a monopoly of control over industrial storage and agri-food technology, as well as access to networks and channels for marketing and distribution. In addition, the perishability of cultures implicated in production contracts requires some measure of coordination between production and processing. Over the potato culture, monopolies are enjoyed that owe themselves to the absence of public cooling and storage facilities, and to the fact that traditional storage methods tend to be unreliable for intensive commodity production.[81]

7.3.3 Allocation of risk

Risk on the plain is allocated in different directions. Production risks, comprised of the potential for harvest failure, low yields, and low crop quality, and its associated financial risks (Figure 15) are allocated to landlords and tenants. Farmers' exposure to the entirety of production risk and the absence of state or private sector insurance mechanisms leaves them footing the bill whenever these production risks are realised. Financial risks include interest rate rises and the inability to service debts, as already discussed. They also include asset sales, which for tenants on the plain tends to be crops and livestock, sometimes sold before their value can fully realised (such as peanuts at harvest time when prices are lowest or when

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[81] Traditional storage mechanisms involve putting the potatoes underground or under cover. Farmers can store them for between 2 to 3 months in this way until prices rise but the quantity must be low and there is a risk of spoiling and shrinkage due to moisture loss. Traditional storage among small farmers is encouraged by the state as a means of increasing price stability (CTPT, n.d.).

livestock is sold before it has matured). Risk allocated in this way is favourable to industry because processors are provided with a steady supply of crops independently of what happens to individual households over the course of production. In the event of tomato undersupply, raw materials have in the past been brought to the plain from the other tomato growing regions for processing. Landlords and tenants may also be exposed to some market risks as well, such as when borrowing is not tied to an output market or where processors refuse to absorb the entire crop or defer repayment.
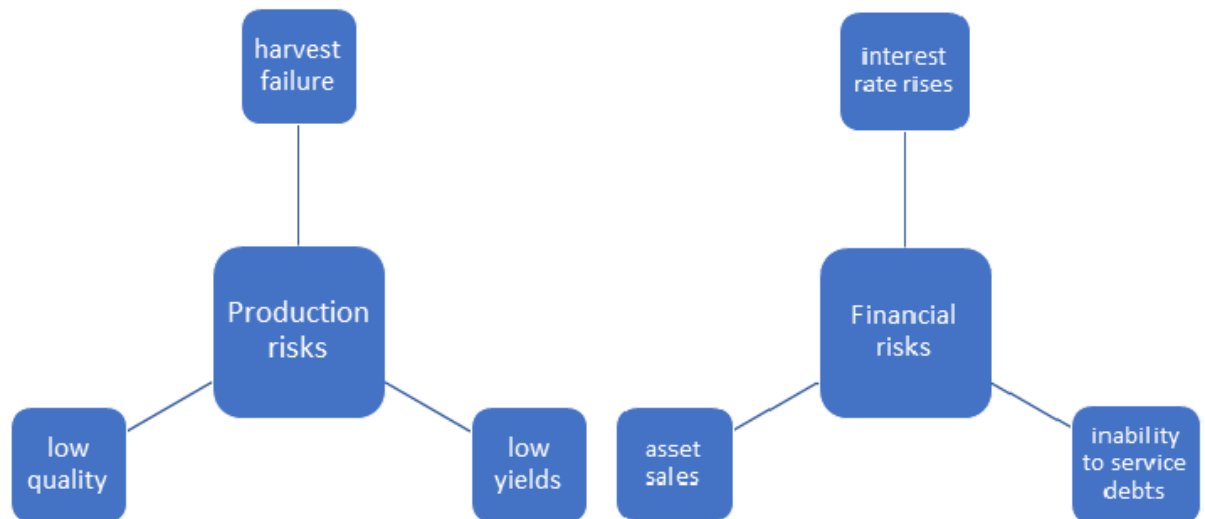
Figure 15. Production risks and financial risks

While production risks and associated financial risks (Figure 15) are narrowly concentrated, part of the appeal of engaging with processors in this way lies in the extent to which farmers are insulated from market risks. Research participants are, in principle, provided with an output market in advance, and the use of fixed pricing means they know the selling price prior to harvest and that the value of their crop should not be subject to price variations. In practice however, and as we saw in the previous chapter, processors can buy back the crop in arbitrary ways. They may buy the entire crop back, in which case market risks are not realised. Alternatively, in seasons where there is oversupply, processors may decide to absorb only the quantity that is enough to cover the debt value, leaving farmers with a portion of the crop that needs to be exchanged in a different market. Further, processors may only agree to buy the crop back after negotiating the fixed price downwards – effectively reneging on commitments to respect fixed prices. The effect is that farmers are exposed to the entirety of production risks on the one hand, and may be differentially exposed to market risks at the discretion of the processors on the other.

An additional issue associated with tomato contracts concerns deferred payments to farmers. Toward the end of the fieldwork in January 2016, research participants reported still not

having been paid for the tomato crop harvested the previous August, purportedly due to difficulties of product marketing higher up the commodity chain. Such delays in repayment, which effectively function as a form of credit passing from farmers to processors,[82] are not uncommon in contract farming where farmers occupy significantly lower bargaining positions (Little and Watts, 1994; Little, 1999; Gopalakrishnan and Sreenvivasa, 2009). While the reason for payment delays on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche is not clear, case studies from elsewhere have found that delays are a means of allowing buyers to speculate on market demand and to invest income from sales before making payments (Gopalakrishnan and Sreenvivasa, 2009; Gutman, 2002).[83]

7.4   Summary

This chapter has moved from the experiences and needs identified in the previous chapter towards unpacking the social relations of farming that are of causal significance. Three sets of social relations, or structures, were identified in this chapter and discussed in terms of their properties and ways of acting: the landlord-tenant relation, the farmer-supplier relation and the farmer-processor relation. These structures connect and interpenetrate, and each is the basis of a particular mode of surplus extraction or exploitation. The landlord-tenant structure organises land and labour, providing tenants with land from which money incomes can be generated and landlords a source of unearned income in the form of rent. The farmer-supplier structure brings other productive resources to the landlord-tenant relation, such as seeds and treatments, on the basis of informal credit. This set of relations allows farmers to produce and allows suppliers to extract unearned incomes in the form of interest on debt. The farmer-processor structure concerns the upstream procurement of agricultural goods based on contracts where land and labour power is accessed indirectly through the upstream leveraging of inputs via credit and by control of the output market. This structure is the basis for resource procurement for the purpose of profit-making. The way the landlord-tenant structure is

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[82] One research participant, Amir, alluded to this: "You wait for him but he doesn't wait for you" (interview with Amir, Raouf, Houda and Nassim). Here, Amir means that farmers are subject to interest rate rises for repayment delays but processors and suppliers are at liberty to delay payments and farmers are unable to impose any sanctions or financial penalties of their own.

[83] Mehdi was one research participant facing payment delays for his tomato crop. When we asked him what farmers can do when their payments are delayed, he suggested individual action had limited reach. His response also reveals a perception expressed by other participants as well that state authorities and processors collude to exploit farmers: "Farmers go [to the processors] and complain, and they tell them they'll pay them the following week. And the following week they go back to the factory and they tell them they'll pay the following week, and this is it. What can you do to him [the owner]? You're going to complain about whom?? [emphasis] The person you're going to complain to [the police, courts etc.] … you find he's the friend of the factory owner. Complain about whom??" Collective action among farmers in Cap Bon is not unprecedented however, as discussed in chapter 5.

positioned vis-à-vis these other structures is one where the farm is required to perform as a small, commodity producing business - albeit where there are elements of patronage and where transactions can be tied rather than entirely free. The way risk is allocated is one which positions landlords and tenant households as having to shoulder the burden of production risks and associated financial risks as well as some market risks. Although all actors are exposed to some measure of risk, tenant poverty and dwindling incomes make their livelihoods less a form of capitalist entrepreneurialism than one of labour, desperation, limited options and the potential for heavy losses. The chapter has illustrated how the bargaining position of research participants is limited vis-à-vis other actors in these structures who wield control over resources and markets of importance to farming livelihoods, and some examples are highlighted of abuses experienced by participants on account of these differences. The following chapter merges this discussion of the social relations of farming with the findings from chapter 6 to produce a possible explanation for need frustration among sharecroppers on the plain.

Chapter 8 Discussion

Introduction

The first part of this chapter draws on these research findings to present and discuss an explanation for the needs of sharecroppers on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain. The findings presented in chapters 6 and 7 are taken and assembled as components that together make up the causal explanation. This involves two retroduced mechanisms: economic exploitation and social subjugation. The findings are then discussed in terms of, first, the re-emerging significance of class in rural poverty studies, and second, the importance of social context and social class for the 'transformative turn' literature. The section, moves on to outline some of the difficulties of transformation and the barriers to change in dialogue with the themes of this particular study and the wider social theoretical literature. Finally, section 8.2 discusses the application of critical realism, reflecting on the meta-theoretical and methodological components and outlining some limitations.

8.1   Explaining the needs of sharecroppers

Concretely, participants have experienced the country's democratic transition in terms of persisting poverty and insecurity that flow from the way they continue to be positioned vis-à-vis other actors on the plain. The transition is viewed as one where the state has retreated even further from their lives but where it continues to support more powerful local actors and, by extension, the autonomy or economic power these actors have historically exercised over sharecroppers and other small farmers. From the perspective of research participants, the new Tunisian state shares with the old a failure to moderate exploitation and to provide opportunities that would allow participants to transcend their immediate structural positions or secure more favourable livelihood outcomes within existing positions. Rather than having led to any substantial changes in their circumstances, they identify the transition as one of continuing and possibly deepening dependencies on more powerful actors and with mounting difficulties securing the conditions for their livelihoods. While freedom of speech was identified as the only positive outcome of the Revolution, participants did not see this as particularly relevant to their livelihoods given the continuing absence of venues through which they could bargain, negotiate and be listened to in matters concerning the production and exchange of resources. Priorities that emerged over the course of interviewing ranged from minor changes, such as improvements to producer prices, to more profound change such as tighter regulation of the private sector or removing private sector actors from production entirely. These were envisaged as mostly state-based interventions.

What does this picture look like more abstractly? In Chapter 6, evidence was presented for the frustration of sharecroppers' needs for social-economic security, relatedness, for esteem and

self-worth and for self-realisation. Evidence for these abstract general needs was discovered through qualitative data coding informed by pre-existing theory as opposed to a 'naïve empiricist' search for statistical regularities in the data. The findings yield the proposition that

> *there is a tendency for sharecroppers on the plain to experience physical and psychological suffering in terms of and associated with low incomes and consumption, overwork and fatigue, perpetual indebtedness, uncertainty, loss of control, unfair prices, a limited sense of worth, a lack of meaningful work and a lack of alternative livelihood opportunities.*

In that chapter, grievances and priorities for change were also drawn out as facilitating interpretation of that data. This yields a further proposition that

> *sharecroppers' suffering is a source of resentment directed toward private actors and the state, and underpins priorities for improvements to incomes and consumption, fairer and more equitable relationships, agricultural development and employment and improvements to safety and personal security.*

Chapter 7 began the task of situating these forms of suffering within the social relations of production and exchange on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain, presenting the findings from efforts to redescribe the data for identifying and unpacking the relations and structures of causal interest. Three structures were presented and unpacked in terms of their objects, relations and in terms of their causal powers and liabilities. Taken together, the findings can be assembled into a causal explanation which provides an answer to sub-questions c) and d), *What are sharecroppers' grievances and priorities for change?* and *What are the mechanisms and conditions under which these needs are frustrated?* and more generally to the second core question of why needs are frustrated. This causal explanation is illustrated in Figure 16. As Figure 16 shows

> *sharecroppers, or labourers, have frustrated needs because they are inserted into enduring social relations that exploit and subjugate them.*

The most significant among these relations are the landlord-tenant relation, the farmer-supplier relation and the farmer-processor relation. These relations are structured, shaping production and exchange on the plain and forming the context or conditions in which livelihoods are pursued. What sustains and links these structures together are material resource dependencies and flows, and shared cognitive categories such as knowledge of who does what in production and exchange and an understanding of the 'rules of the game'. As discussed in chapter 7, these structures are constitutive of particular structural positions and they produce a variety of potentials, or powers and liabilities, that are unevenly distributed across these

positions. The relationship between the research participants who occupy these structural positions and the larger structures of which they are a part is treated here as *external* rather than *internal*. That is to say, research participants are occupants of these structural positions and are active in the reproduction of structures but they are not themselves, as whole entities or persons, part of these structures. One occupant can be replaced by another occupant for
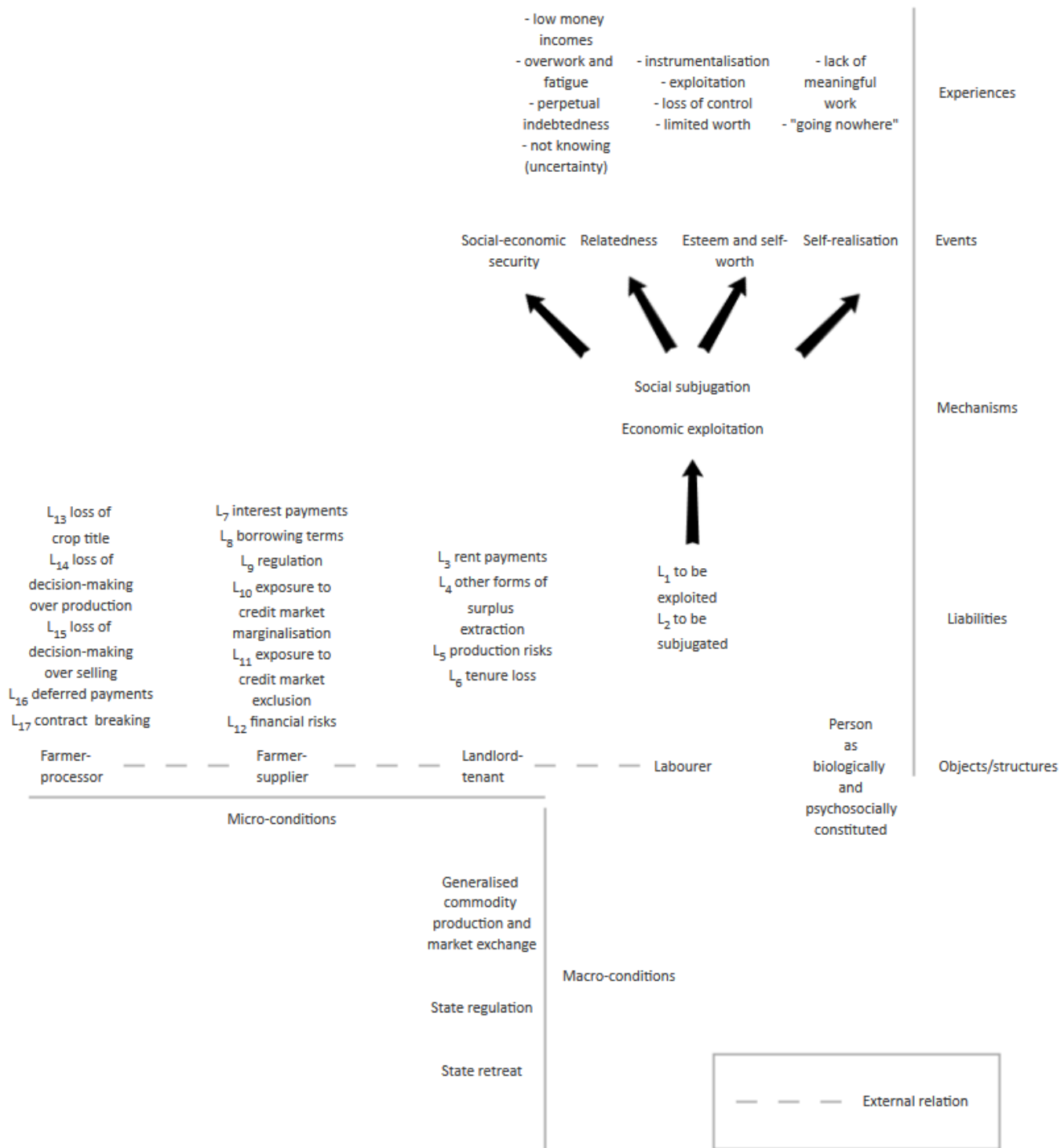
Figure 16. CR causal explanation for the needs of sharecroppers.

example with the positions themselves remaining essentially intact.[84] The occupiers of these structural positions, as persons, are treated here in trans-historical terms as structured entities, biologically and psychosocially constituted, and who are needs-bearing, dependent and vulnerable - as a review of the needs literature review in Chapter 2 has suggested. According to this view, human needs exist independently of political, economic, social and cultural beliefs and arrangements, but the socio-historical form they take and the manner and extent to which they are satisfied or frustrated will be circumscribed by these arrangements.

Moving between experiences of physical and psychological suffering and these social structures, it is possible to make a retroductive inference about causation:

> *that there appear to be two main causal mechanisms which are active and which deprive people of access to material and non-material objects for satisfying needs. These mechanisms are* e*conomic exploitation and social subjugation.*

Economic exploitation refers to the appropriation or capture of surpluses from one group by another. On the plain it is actualised when people, as labourers, become exposed to mechanisms of wealth extraction expressed in L_3, L_4, L_7, L_{18}. Exploitation is experienced as handing over the crop, low money incomes and limited consumption, overwork and fatigue, always owing money, and "working for nothing". According to Lotfi for example, "The exploitation by the suppliers and the owners of the cooling stores and the factories; they are colonising us. They are colonising farmers. Look, you plant it and you take care of it then you take it with your own hands to them. And they are earning as much as they want" (Interview with Lotfi).

Social subjugation refers to being coerced or commanded and is activated when labourers are exposed to sets of disciplines and compulsions that shape production and exchange and set limits to sharecroppers' capacities for action (L_5, L_6, L_8, L_9, L_{10}, L_{11}, L_{12}, L_{14}, L_{15}, L_{16}, L_{17}). Subjugation is experienced in terms of a loss of control over work and exchange, the feeling of being instrumentalised (as a 'means' to an end), of not being listened to or sufficiently cared for, feelings of insecurity and uncertainty, a sense of meaningless work and a desire for alternative livelihoods, and of having limited means for moving out of immediate circumstances. For example, Khaled felt that respect from suppliers and the autonomy they granted depended on how much money their clients have, "If you have money they will respect you but if you do not you'll have to work and buy in the way they decide. He feels that he is working as servant for them because of the exploitation" (Interpreter's summary of interview with Khaled). In respect to landlords, Midou felt **"there is no equality between the owner who

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[84] We can also imagine the occupants moving out of these structural positions and into ones that are more conducive to need satisfaction.

takes half of the profit without any hard work and the tenant farmer who works the whole year. But he has to accept this because he has no other job" (Interpreter's summary of interview with Midou). And for Lotfi again, "The only time you feel you have value is when your product is ready and he comes to buy it. At this point you can speak a little bit. When you have the product you can decide which price you want to sell it for. After he takes the product from you, you become a weak person, without any value" (Interview with Lotfi). CR's emphasis on stratification and emergence allows us to see that these are complex chains of liabilities, some of which are active and some whose activation or inactivity depends on yet more sub-level mechanisms and contingent conditions.[85]

8.1.1 Macro-conditions

The structured relations which form the conditions or context in which livelihoods are pursued are nested within higher-level macro-conditions.[86] These macro-conditions were introduced in chapter 5 and might also be referred to as 'context' in a very general sense. Returning to these here allows situating these structures, or micro-conditions, within broader trends and processes and to account for these in this explanation of need frustration.

First, the movement of crops, land, and other productive resources between actors on the plain occurs within a broader context of generalised commodity production as an outcome of a historical process of agrarian change on the plain. Farmers are integrated into capitalist social relations where securing the conditions for life and for future farming takes place to a large extent inside of "commodity relations and the disciplines they impose" (Bernstein, 2010, p.102; also Bernstein, 2016). The elements of production and reproduction are produced for and sought through market exchange: the requisites for farming are acquired on the market, crops are exchanged for cash, and basic needs are met by acquiring money incomes for consumption. These features also distinguish sharecropping on the plain from its more 'feudal' or 'pre-capitalist' variants historically studied in agrarian political economy and which still persist in some parts of the world (for example, Kumar and Lieberherr, 2016; Sugden, 2013; Bhaduri, 1973; 1977; Byres, 1983b), though farming on the plain shares with other instances of sharecropping elements of rural patronage and exploitation through transactions tied across

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[85] While an examination of these further contingencies is outside the scope of this study, several can be highlighted for the purpose of illustration. For example, one of the various possible ways a harvest might fail, as a production risk (L5), is under conditions of strong winds that damage crops. Another might be the outbreak of a plant disease. In the absence of harvest failure, economic hardship can intensify because of other contingencies as well, such as when processors renege on contracts or refuse to absorb all of the crop in circumstances of 'overproduction'. These are some of the more obvious contingencies. What's at stake here however are the immediate, contingent or conditional social arrangements that distribute powers and liabilities unequally among the actors involved in production and exchange.
[86] Here, the distinction between macro- and micro- is relative rather than absolute (Bygstad and Munkvold, 2011). Macro- relates to sub-level components while micro- relates to components at a higher level.

the input and output sides of production (Olsen, 1996; Harriss-White, 1999; 2003; Jan and Harriss-White, 2012; Srivastava, 1989; Glover and Kusterer, 1990; Little and Watts, 1994a; Swain, 1999; 2000; Sahu et al., 2004; Pattenden, 2016; McMichael, 2013b).

The landlord-tenant relation which governs the exchange of land, labour and other resources predates the turn toward producing for the market, but it continues to endure alongside other structures of agrarian capitalism that arose over the second half of the twentieth century. As described in Chapter 5, this began with early stirrings towards producing for the market in the late 1940s which deepened in the context of national development in the post-Independence period. This intensified in the period of liberalisation after the 1970s and restructuring from the 1980s onwards. The abandonment of 'traditional' farming practices accompanied the emergence of agro-industry on the plain geared toward predictable and fast-maturing cultures, an expansion of trade in inputs such as high yielding seeds, chemical fertilisers, pesticides and treatments, and new equipment, varieties and products. Much like has been observed elsewhere (Bernstein, 1981; Bush, 2007; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2007; Das, 2007; King, 2003; 2007), the subsequent process of liberalisation and restructuring has seen the state oversee its own withdrawal from direct involvement the sector in favour of fostering a more business-friendly environment, though it has retained an indirect role in elaborating frameworks and mechanisms to support and regulate tenure, enterprises, and to coordinate sectoral actors in line with a global process of agricultural neoliberalisation. State efforts to generalise contract farming is a case in point.

8.1.2 Agency and structure

Given that these relations and structures are need-frustrating, what explains participants' cooperation and conformity? The place of agency in this picture fends off a deterministic approach of structure, and keeps it consistent with CR approaches to structure and agency that emphasise their iteration over time (Bhaskar, 1998; Archer, 1995). What is clear is that the identified structures are constitutive of powers *as well as liabilities* for sharecroppers, meaning that the social relations of production and exchange on the plain are both constraining *and* enabling. On the one hand, needs for social-economic security, relatedness, esteem and self-worth, and the need for self-realisation are neglected in the context of these relations; while on the other, seasonally renewing these relations, or (re)acquiring the structural positions as labourers over time, and performing accordingly is a means of pursuing money incomes for satisfying other basic needs, such as for food and clothing – even if that level is unsatisfactory from the point of view of many of the research participants. In critical realist terms, a combination of powers and liabilities are activated through these structures, while others are produced or exist but remain *in potentia*. Whether or not a hierarchy of needs can be said to exist, as discussed briefly in Chapter 2, these findings suggest agents act in a context where

needs are pitted against one another. By cooperating, conforming and performing according to the directives of these structures, participants are able to realise some potentials at the cost of others. Though these trade-offs may be expressed only at the level of practical consciousness, for others they are reflexive and explicit. The following remark from Mehdi is illustrative of decision making in a context of constrained choices:

> *The farmer is a part of agriculture, firstly. He lives from agriculture. His life is agriculture. He doesn't have other options. If he doesn't work and produce he'll die from hunger* (interview with Mehdi).

Sharecroppers' grievances and priorities for change suggest some degree of reflexively over their social circumstances, yet the organisation of farming practices around these structures and the absence of organised opposition suggests passive acquiescence to them. Cooperation might yield certain benefits but alternatives are few, and failing to perform or even resisting can undermine 'trust' and invites costs and punishments. Participants indicated these costs and punishments could come in the form of compromised dependencies, such as when capitals refuse to continue lending or where more stringent conditions are applied. So, while these structures exert causal influence on the people implicated in them, the sources of these structures are found, partly, in the activities of sharecroppers themselves whose decisions and actions contribute to their reproduction, as well as in the activities of other, interacting, human agents who are implicated in agriculture on the plain. These would include other farmers of various size as well as suppliers/lenders and a whole host of actors in the various commodity chains, such as exporters, seed companies and consumers. The structure-agency iteration has implications for how we think about transformation and barriers to change, as discussed in more detail in section 8.1.4.

8.1.3   Class and context matter

The re-emerging significance of class

What do these findings point toward or reveal in light of the existing literature? First, they support the re-emerging significance of class in rural poverty studies (Campling et al., 2016; Pattenden et. al., 2017; Hickey, 2010; da Corta, 2010) by illustrating how class mechanisms of exploitation and subjugation have consequences for need frustration among sharecroppers on the plain. As discussed in Chapter 2, class is approached in a way that is empirically and conceptually distinct from popular sociological definitions and as the sets of social relations associated with the production of goods and services, shaped by the ownership and control over productive resources such as land, and which are the basis of exploitation as the extraction of surplus value (Bernstein, 2010a; Pattenden, 2016; Byres, 1983a; Wright, 1996; 2009).

With this class theoretic in mind, one set of findings of relevance to the rural poverty studies literature is that the psychosocial dimensions of need frustration are tied to class mechanisms of exploitation and subjugation. As discussed in Chapter 2, most of the relational (and also residual) work in poverty studies deals with material depravation, but these findings speak to an emerging scholarship that engages with its psychosocial side (Lister, 2004; Sen, 1983; Alkire, 2002; Jo, 2013; Green and Hulme, 2005; Hickey, 2010; Mosse, 2010; Bebbington et al., 2010; Williams et al., 2012, Scoones, 2015). Insecurity and misrecognition are located here not as mere symptoms of poverty but are rather part and parcel of systems of production and exchange, such as when people are required to recurrently renew their debt relations, forfeit decision-making over planting, and expose their households to structural risks as conditions for their participation in agriculture. This avoids a reduction or association of the psychosocial dimensions with its material aspects, such as to say that people feel insecure because they are materially deprived, but rather finds that these psychosocial dimensions are rooted in everyday relations and practices that organise the production and exchange of material resources. In the same vein, it avoids doing the obverse, which is to confuse actors' interpretations of their situation, such as their sense of being exploited, with their material referents, such as the actual practice of surplus appropriation. This finding does not exhaust the concrete and multiple sources of insecurity and misrecognition, but does capture those identified more narrowly with people's livelihoods on the plain. That class, as conceptualised here, can have psychosocial consequences suggests existing approaches may run up against analytical weaknesses if they stop short of considering economic power, exploitation, domination and so on (e.g. Walker et al., 2013; Walker, 2014) in situations when these might be highly relevant, and that weaknesses may also pertain when class is conceptualised differently in terms of shared, empirical attributes, like income and attitudes.

Capturing the psychosocial dimensions of poverty and their rootedness in class relations indicates contract making consists of more than purely material factors. This lends support to the need for critical perspectives on contract making that explore underneath surface appearances through the phenomenology of contract making, how contracts facilitate surplus appropriation, and how farmer 'autonomy' or decision-making is exercised in contexts of severely constrained choice (Clapp, 1994; ActionAid, 2015; Oya, 2012; Bhaduri, 1986; Byres, 1983). In contrast to residual accounts that emphasise social harmony, 'partnerships' and the 'win-win' character of contract making (e.g. Cheung, 1969; Stiglitz, 1974; Grosh, 1994), what is drawn out here are the antagonistic class relational dimensions: subjugation and exploitation and its forms (rent, debt and resource extraction) tied to people's positions as net sellers of labour power (Pattenden, 2016; Bernstein 2010). In this vein, the study is consistent with other relational studies examining the class basis of sharecropping (Hamzaoui, 1979; Byres, 1983a;

1983b; Bhaduri 1973; 1986; Pertev, 1986; Bharadwaj, 1985; Jarosz, 1991; Van Onselen, 1993; Kayatekin, 1996; Srivastava, 1999; Brass, 1999; Garrabou et al., 2001; Rao, 2005; Nyantakyi-Frimpong and Bezner Kerr, 2016); and market exchange, including interlinked markets and contract farming (Olsen, 1996; Harriss-White, 1999; 2003; Jan and Harriss-White, 2012; Ali Jan and Harris-White, 2012; Srivastava, 1989; Glover and Kusterer, 1990; Little and Watts, 1994a; Swain, 1999; 2000; Sahu et al., 2004; Pattenden, 2016; McMichael, 2013b; Porter and Phillips-Howard, 1997; Raynolds, 2000; Steffen and Echánove, 2005). It goes further however in drawing out the non-material trade-offs in contract making alongside the material that the rural poor have to make so that others may profit, described in Chapter 7 and section 8.1.2. Factors like autonomy and recognition, which are not amenable to quantification, are also compromised or 'exchanged', but these fall by the wayside in studies that tend to favour of material emphases. These are also absent from residual accounts in the development mainstream which are prone to examine contract making, credit, debt and so on from the perspectives of business actors, and to model the benefits in terms of efficiency, lower risks, higher returns, and so on (Oya, 2012).

Such accounts are difficult to sustain in view of the findings in this study, where participants neither viewed contract-making as a straightforward 'win-win' arrangement nor a method of more appropriately or fairly distributing risk and allocating resources but rather as a means by which other class actors could exploit their structural positions by setting the terms and conditions of production and exchange. Their participation in contract making and cultivating 'trust' with contractors constituted actions, decisions and strategising within existing structural options, and is consistent with Wood's (2003, p.456) observation that the rural and urban poor are often required to secure conditions for their livelihoods at the price of *"dependency and the foreclosure of autonomy. Becoming a client, in other words. This involves the acceptance of truncated ambitions of self-improvement and advancement."* The regularly recurring phrase, "we are working for others", captures how these simultaneous contracts are experienced, and effects marked in both their material circumstances and diminished prospects, and their declining autonomy over their work and lives. The absence of alternative livelihood opportunities, and what Marx called "the dull compulsion of economic forces" (Bernstein, 2010a, p.27), contributes to participants' cooperation and conformity.

In addition, these class antagonisms appear to have crystallised majorly between labour and industry-finance on the plain as opposed to labour and land, the latter of which is the commonly examined fault line in studies of sharecropping (e.g. Byres, 1983b). Agribusiness interactions emerge as more prominent sources of contention and likely reflects the shift in economic power away from land towards these actors over the plain's development trajectory, expressed through the latter's strengthened position to set the terms and conditions of

production and exchange (Bernstein, 2005). If Tunisia is undergoing a "reactivation" of class struggle in the countryside, as Gana (2012, p.207) suggests it might be, its locus on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain appears to lie here. Both tenants and smallholders have different structural positions in relation to the land, but, as critical studies of contract farming have found in relation to smallholders (Clapp, 1988; Little and Watts, 1994a; Porter and Phillips-Howard, 1997; Raynolds, 2000; Steffen and Echánove, 2005) these findings suggest both share the same class positions as net sellers of labour power in relation to suppliers and processors: suppliers finance production while processors gain indirect access to land and labour in both cases, with the difference lying in whose land is accessed (i.e. whether it is the landlord's or the smallholder's). Similar sentiments towards suppliers and processors were shared by both groups, while frustration towards landlords among the former was less pronounced and priorities for change had little to do with landownership (Table 11, Chapter 6). These antagonisms could be identified because the study considers sharecropping in contract farming, which differs to most studies of contract farming that examine the lives and livelihoods of smallholders (e.g. Little and Watts, 1994a; 1994b).

While sharecroppers' expressed frustrations towards these actors may of course reflect their feeling less at ease to criticise their landlords openly, it is more likely to reflect their knowledge that even were they to acquire their own land as smallholders they would continue to be exploited by more dominant agribusiness actors, or remain net sellers of labour power, and see their autonomy circumscribed. Consistent with studies from elsewhere (e.g. Agarwal, 2014), both tenants and smallholders on the plain prefer to leave agriculture entirely having have come to view the prospects for social-economic advancement as lying outside rather within it.[87] In their view, prospects lie with regular salaried work in other sectors, which is valued for being less unpredictable and more secure – though a livelihood trajectory along these lines would retain participants in the same structural positions as net sellers of labour power, even if it allows them to reposition themselves more favourably within the broader

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[87] As Marwa explained for instance, "I expect [my children] to live better than me. I'm always tiring myself so that my children can live better than me. I hope they can get better things and get away from agriculture because I can see that they cannot put in a big effort like I do. They cannot struggle or get tired […] I want them to escape from agriculture and work on anything else. If they worked in a fixed job they could get a salary every month. As I told you before, I wait about three months without getting money to the house. Where I can get it from? Go out stealing to get money? I hope that my children get a fixed job in any place, but not in agriculture." Ahmed, a smallholder, indicated how his attachment to the land had changed: "In the 1980s, land was sacred to me. It was like affectionate mother. But… I am still young, but they [agribusiness] have made us hate farming. Personally, I hate farming."

'classes of labour'. This is significant for envisaging alternative structural arrangements and a transformative politics because it would seem to foreclose the transformative potential of 'land to the tiller' programmes (Prosterman et al., 2009) in the absence of additional structural changes in this context, such as moving towards agroecology (Kremen et al., 2012), and to preclude a politics of 'staying on the land', such as advanced by La Via Campesina.

Class and context matter to transition

Moving to the transitions literature, this study shares with other studies and surveys conducted in transition societies (Pham et al., 2007; 2009; Vinck et al., 2011; Vinck and Pham, 2014; Robins, 2010; 2011a; 2011b; 2012), as well as elsewhere in Tunisia (Andrieu et al., 2015), the finding that individuals, communities and groups raise poverty and insecurity as priorities. Agendas for change typically emphasise responses to these, and this is also reflected in these research findings. One important set of implications that come through from these findings is that context and class, as defined above, matter to the 'transformative turn' (and to the transitional justice literature as well) for understanding needs. On the surface, this may seem rather unremarkable: the 'transformative turn' has pushed for the recognition of 'structural violence', inequalities and legacies of poverty in transition societies which gesture towards class and context sensitivity. But the conceptualisations employed in this study offer the field something new and different for analyses of need in transition societies. For studies that eschew consideration and examination of context and class in these terms there are a number of implications (Table 17).

Implications	Examples
Extent of need frustration understood partially and incompletely	Needs of labour absent; 'why are sharecroppers' needs relevant to transition?'
Continuities and changes in structures, relations and mechanisms in a political transition are missed	Emphasis on the quality of political transition; agrarian transition not considered; agricultural policy unchanged
Features of conflict dynamics and violence overlooked	Lack of rural income-generating opportunities overlooked in favour of racial and ethnic framings

Table 17. Implications of perspectives that eschew context and class.

First, the extent of need frustration will be understood only partially and incompletely. This criticism can be levelled in two directions: to the transitional justice literature that theorises in a way that strips people of their social-economic context, and to the 'transformative turn' that has sought to move beyond this towards considering the social-economic dimensions of transition. In the first case, the charge is relatively straightforward. Theorising narrowly in terms of people's experiences of state repression, while valid, misses a whole host of other

needs that are grounded in everyday class oppression and which are experienced as insecurity, frustration, hopelessness, and so on. This has been a characteristic feature and outcome of much transitional justice theorising and practice already, whose emphasis on political change has meant abstracting people away from their social setting and conceptualising them more narrowly as emergent citizens, rights-holders etc. in emergent liberal polities. As others have shown, this line of thinking has characterised the field and its theorising since its origins in the emerging democracies of the 1980s, when human rights activists, lawyers, policymakers and other actors sought to use these political conjunctures for moving beyond 'naming and shaming' towards establishing accountability for past human rights abuses (Arthur, 2009). By abstracting in this way, the needs that have been raised as requiring a transitional justice response have been those associated with extraordinary acts of political violence and violations of civil and political rights, while what is missed are those rooted in the relations and structures of society.

In the second case, the 'transformative turn' has pushed the community of practitioners and scholars towards situating people in their social-economic (and cultural) contexts, but has told us little about class relations and structures and the deep processes which underlie them. Where class does appear in the literature, it is treated as an identity category that intersects with other categories such as gender and race (for example, Jelin, 2011; Arthur, 2011; Boesten, 2014). There is nothing problematic about this, and this is a significant and underexplored aspect of class in transition societies. But the conceptualisation of context and class offered here, and defined above, differs by serving as a framework that reconnects poverty to social-economic processes of accumulation and distribution associated with the way the state and market function. This has allowed drawing out how people's material and psychosocial illbeing might be linked to people's inclusion into, as well as marginalisation and exclusion from, processes and trajectories of capitalist development. The transitional justice literature and the literature that has fed the 'transformative turn' has been muted on this point: at its worst, poverty is discussed in vague terms, as a condition, aberration and legacy of poor governance, to be addressed by processes of 'development' (for example, Duthie, 2014) which as Campling et al (2016, p.1754) suggest consist essentially of "subjecting labouring classes to particular forms of (exploitative) work relations". Other perspectives have, rightly, tied poverty to economic and social rights violations, such as deliberate plunder and corruption (Sharp, 2014; Sankey, 2013; Carranza, 2008), but these in and of themselves do not exhaust an understanding of the social mechanisms of poverty creation that are part and parcel of capitalist development. Resources such as land and labour can, after all, be appropriated and livelihoods squeezed through the ordinary and relatively 'uncontroversial' functioning of production and exchange.

The second implication is that by failing to consider class and context in a political transition, continuities and changes in the harm-generating structures, relations and mechanisms from periods of repression to periods of political transition and democracy are overlooked. Continuities have been a central concern to some of the recent work on gender and transition (Boesten 2010; 2012; 2014; Boesten and Wilding, 2015; Fiske and Shackel, 2015; Porter, 2015; O'Rourke, 2015) which has shed light onto resilient gender hierarchies and ideologies in transition states that feed on and feed into political violence. This study does not work with gender, but it does something similar by drawing out particular sets of material social relations that continue to define people's class place and position across a period of political transition, and which shape people's access to land, labour and other resources. As the findings suggest, the period of Tunisia's transition has not been characterised by experiences of positive social change on the plain but by continuity, meaning that people continue to be exposed to mechanisms of exploitation and subjugation whose presence preceded the Revolution in 2010/11 and which emerged across a specific development trajectory. Research participants' experiences are of continuing feelings of insecurity, frustration, hopelessness and so on which have become more pronounced as they have struggled to secure the conditions for their livelihoods in a context of rising costs.

These continuities across a political transition are however situated in a longer agrarian transition on the plain, or a development trajectory characterised by the expansion of capitalism in agriculture. As described in Chapter 5 and briefly above, this has been underway on the plain since at least the 1940s, and like other agrarian formations is presently characterised by the "globalizing tendencies of the organisation of agriculture" (Bernstein, 2009, p.256). Outside of the transitional justice field, work by the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies in South Africa, and in particular of Ben Cousins, Hall and O'Laughlin, serves as a forewarning as to the resilience of poverty-generating structures which have remained intact more than two decades after the end of apartheid and in a context of agricultural neoliberalisation (for example, O'Laughlin et al., 2013). These processes of change can be conflictual and violent (Cramer and Richards, 2011), and in Tunisia can be expected to persist in the absence of a countermovement and as long as the prevailing economic narrative remains unchallenged: "that the best way to boost agricultural exports is to cater to the prerogatives of landowners and investors which, for too long, had been subordinated to the interests of tenants paying less than market rates for land use. Small farmer interests are shunted aside in the rush in [Tunisia and Egypt] to secure the neoliberal status quo" (Ayeb and Bush, 2016).

A third effect of overlooking social contexts and social class is that important dynamics underpinning conflict and violence broadly defined are missed. As an extensive literature

within agrarian political economy has shown, grievances which lead to conflict and violence often have roots in agrarian social structures and in processes of agrarian change that dispossess, deprive and humiliate particular classes of actors (Cramer and Richards, 2011; Mason, 2004; Bergsmo et al., 2010; Elster, 2010; Edelman and Borras, 2016). More recently, they have also been associated with a rise of authoritarian populism, with rural areas having provided strong support bases for regressive and exclusionary politics and ideologies that feed on and feed into grievances generated by "downward mobility, deepening poverty and insecurity, inequality and despair" (Scoones et al, 2017, p.5). These are not just to do with material depravation but also feelings of insecurity, subjugation and so on expressed as anger and frustration (Chambers, 1995; 1983; Narayan et al., 2000; Walker et al., 2013; Walker, 2014), which this study has also found evidence for. Where the conflict literature has engaged with rurality, it has tended to treat the underlying motivation for conflict narrowly "in terms of ethnic chauvinism or individual pecuniary gain" (Buijtenhujis, 2000, p.120; also Fitzpatrick, 2006) while the transitional justice field has said little or nothing about rurality, preferring instead to render it a development problem of mass poverty in transition societies, treated as a largely 'inert' set of conditions in which people find themselves, and as a symptom of illiberal government and governance failure which is amenable to technocratic forms of neoliberal development.

This is problematic, not least in the context of these findings and in the more general Tunisian context where neoliberal development is found to have contributed to rural tension and unrest. The findings from this study also support that literature. As already mentioned in Chapter 1, scholarship on the Tunisian Revolution has begun locating the roots of contention in 2010/11 in the country's agrarian structure, characterised over the course of the 2000s by rising tensions over agricultural resources, food prices, growing discontent around increasing production costs, farmer indebtedness, and a lack of employment opportunities (Gana, 2011; 2012; 2013; 2016; Ayeb, 2012; Bush and Martiniello, 2016). Alia Gana (2012; 2013) links these to processes operating at higher scales: to transformations in the global food regime (McMichael, 2013), the IMF- and World Bank- inspired restructuring of the country's agriculture since the 1980s, and to the promotion of associated development strategies at the national level that have favoured the development of coastal regions at the expense of the interior. Renewed mobilisation in Tunisia since 2015 has come as a response to the failure of new economic opportunities to materialise, with actors mobilised around demands to address persistent poverty, unemployment and access to resources and services. While the plain has not witnessed forms of organised advocacy politics such as has been seen elsewhere, class antagonisms are evident, as noted above, and that while these are known in the literature to be

a source of peaceful social change they are also a known source of conflict and violence and can be tied to support for more regressive and exclusionary forms of politics.

8.1.4 Social transformation and the barriers to change

The macro-micro or agency-structure relation drawn out over the preceding sections can inform a context-specific consideration of what the structural barriers to change might be. One of the limitations of the transformative turn literature, identified in Chapter 2, had to do with its call for transformative change unfurling without serious consideration of its structural barriers. As the agency-structure iteration and the contributions outlined above would suggest, paths to transforming unjust relations and structures are complex and there are likely to be a whole host of barriers that stand in the way of change – in this particular case, at all scales from the local to the national and above. Little, if any, of the literature on 'transformative transitional justice' or 'transformative justice' has engaged with this question nor with what social theory has said about transformation, as already discussed above and in Chapter 2. Transformation, as the ontology of structures suggests, is difficult because it involves confronting multiple obstacles or barriers that give structures their lasting and durable character: that they organise collective activity and enforce cooperation and conformity; involve vast numbers of actors and classes of actors; imprint themselves in material objects, cognitive categories and bodily behaviours; and emerge and develop or accumulate historically as reiterated social interactions (Smith, 2011; Bhaskar, 1998; 2008b; 2009; Archer, 1995). This section briefly discusses the difficulties of transformation and the barriers to change in relation to transformative justice practice. It draws on the themes of this particular study and in dialogue with the wider literature.

In the first instance, the way structures propel people in "similar directions, engaging in patterned behaviours that align in common motion" (Smith, 2011, p.347; also Archer, 1995) means that transformative change has to reckon with existing modes of enforcing cooperation and conformity. But for the most oppressive and harmful of social structures, conformity and cooperation in this 'common motion' provides the conditions for physical survival, or the satisfaction of basic needs, and possibly the conditions for realising other potentials or sustaining other practices that are considered of value to the people implicated in them. Even in circumstances where structures provide only the barest of conditions for survival, populations, groups and communities may reason that participation in this 'common motion' is preferable to standing outside of it if alternatives appear few and far between. Opposition is meanwhile discouraged by the way in which structures apportion out costs and punishments (contingent liabilities, in realist terms) while failing to conform tends to lead in the long run to either cooperation and conformity or being cast out or exiting from structures entirely, much like how the participants withheld requesting pension support for fear of losing access to land.

While agendas for transformative change envisage working with affected populations, communities and groups, exploited and oppressed groups may then either acquiesce to structures or prefer to avoid confronting them directly because of the risks posed. As much of the literature on peasant and other forms of 'resistance' has highlighted, individuals and groups tend to either eschew open and overt advocacy politics in favour of cooperation and support for the existing order, such as through patronage networks, or they engage in responses that are covert, hidden, disguised, and which are "attuned to [their] particular social structure, strengths and defensive capabilities" (Scott, 2013, p.71; also 1990; 1985; 1976; Kerkvliet, 2009; 2002). In both cases, responses may yield improved material circumstances but existing structural arrangements remain intact, an outcome that led Eric Hobsbawm to observe several decades ago that subordinate groups often appear less interested in social transformation than in "working the system… to their minimum disadvantage" (Hobsbawm, 1973, p.13). Attempts by farmers on the plain to improve their position by cultivating 'trust' with their creditors while simultaneously holding them in low regard is an illustration. One barrier to transformative change then is associated with the distribution of rewards and costs and the real and perceived risks faced by affected populations, communities and groups that are envisaged to be the agents of transformation.

Another barrier has to do with the sheer number of actors implicated in the reproduction of structures. But for the most micro of social structures, reproduction of structures involves a multiplicity of social actors as well as different classes of actors with often diverging interests and beliefs. The character of particular social structures and their impact usually stands

> *beyond the grasp of any of the persons who interactionally sustain them. So, even when some people implicated in a social structure would prefer a different system of relations that produces different outcomes, rarely can they exert the influence to change the structure […] This dynamic of putting structures outside of the ready control of their individual constituent participants endows them with an autonomy to operate and persist at a level above and beyond those who might seek to transform or end them.* (Smith, 2011, p.365).

Transformation then, like reproduction, appears to be beyond the bounds of a single actor or a single class of actors, such as sharecroppers, relying instead on the participation or cooperation of other implicated actors whose interests and beliefs may diverge on account of differences of class, gender, ethnicity and so on. Such coalitions for transformation can and do occur (Grugel et al., 2017), and on agrarian issues might include farmers of different sizes, as well as the state and other non-state actors such as collective action and self-governance

organisations and advocacy groups (Evans, 2016)[88] While genuinely independent forms of representation in rural areas were historically restricted in Tunisia, new political opportunities (Tarrow, 2011) for collective action (or collective 'powers' in realist terms) may have opened up over the course of the transition, even if those opportunities are not recognised or exploited. While this study has been more structure- than agency-oriented and has not therefore examined transformative agential responses (i.e. cases where actors have reflexively and deliberately sought to transform particular structures), one potential area for example lies in actors' capacities to translate freedom of speech and freedom to organise into forms of independent rural representation channels for communication that can introduce new collective or associational powers. These were raised as priority areas over the course of interviewing. Cases from other transition states, such as in Brazil and South Africa for example, suggest this is plausible although the capacity of such groups to effect transformative change in the long run is debated (Bebbington, 2007; Bernstein, 2014; Edelman and Borras, 2016).

On the other side, agendas for transformative change may also be resisted or undermined by actors and classes of actors who perceive such change a threat to their interests. Chapter 2 described for instance how state monopolisation and centralisation of agricultural services in Tunisia followed by a government proposal to collectivise agriculture at the end of the 1960s met with a strong reaction from the large landholders in Cap Bon who leveraged their influence to have the programme abandoned. In this particular case, large landholders and poorer farmers appear to have been largely aligned in their resistance to state-driven structural change, albeit for different reasons. In other cases, the promotion of structural change and efforts to effect it may generate new grievances, polarise actors, and contribute to renewed social conflict and violence. The emergence and growth the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) and the freeing up of rural unions over the course of Brazil's democratic transition for instance was accompanied by a parallel rise in paramilitary groups and rural violence, as those with a stake in existing system sought to respond to collective efforts to challenge it (Hammond, 2009; Houtzager, 2004). Agendas for change may also be resisted or subdued

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[88] Evans examines networks of social movements, NGOs and trade unions working on land and housing rights issues in South Africa and concludes that they are potential vehicles for transformative justice. Compromise over class differences is exhibited for example in the case of the transnational peasant movement La Via Campesina, where class-based mobilisation has been largely shunned favour of a common 'peasant' identity and anti-capitalist framework articulated toward state and non-state actors, such as the International Financial Institutions and multinational agrochemical and biotechnology corporations (Edelman and Borras, 2016). It has meant however that preference goes toward the interests of some rural groups, such as landowning farmers who employ rural labour, while the interests of others such as landless workers and labour justice issues have been minimised. In the critical agrarian scholarship, the debate between scholars emphasising capitalism and class-based forms of mobilisation and those emphasising more identity-based politics is cast in terms of the 'Marxists' in the case of the former and the 'populists' in the case of the latter.

through formal institutional and governance arrangements, such as those concerned with the management of natural resources and of food and commodity chains. Examples of the latter of relevance to this study at the national level are the tomato and potato filières in Tunisia which include actors such as UTAP, UTICA, state ministries, interprofessional groups and so on. While such governance/management forms have often been touted in development mainstream as inclusive and empowering for their various 'stakeholders', the critical development literature has shone light onto how these put an institutional or organisational face onto underlying structural arrangements that "define and advance social class formation and differentiation in families and local societies" through processes of wealth extraction and class exploitation (Davis and Ruddle, 2012, p.231; also Nem Singh, 2012; Little and Watts, 1994a). For this reason, transformation is often conceived of outside and in opposition to prevailing institutions and organisations and the actors associated with them.

Additional barriers are associated with both the material objects and cognitive categories implicated in social structures. In respect to materials, the ontology of structures suggests their durability owes itself in part to the way social relations are inscribed in material objects which exert "in turn the causal effect of tending to perpetuate the nature of the social relations that the material objects facilitate and express" (Smith, 2011, p.349). Returning to the plain again, farming practices there have become inscribed by high-yielding varieties, chemical inputs and technologies, and the development of agri-food processors over an historical trajectory of state support, retreat, and private sector growth. These structures have been driven by historically increasing yields and access to new inputs and technologies, and would cease to exist in this form without these specific material objects that sustain them. Trying to introduce more equitable and more sustainable systems which overturn farmers' dependencies, such as through agroecology for example (Kremen et al., 2012) mentioned above, would be extremely difficult because it involves new material objects, such as new crops, technologies and equipment, as well as new knowledge, skills and bodily dispositions. To a large extent the priorities for change identified by participants and presented in Chapter 5 did not involve working with new material objects, and tended rather to consist of similar farming practices and the same materials but with modifications to some existing relations.

This leads into an additional barrier to change that lies in the conceptions agents have of what they are doing in their structured contexts, and the mental schemas that organise make sense of their relations and practices. Structures are reproduced and sustained in part by cognitive categories so that transformative change often involves alterations or modifications to these categories. Such categories are culturally meaningful, and in agrarian formations have historically included hierarchies that shape people's place and position and which inform the services that should be performed and loyalties rewarded by one group to another, as well as

the way obligations and entitlements are distributed among members of that hierarchy. The cognitive work in efforts to promote transformative change has historically involved unmasking the ideological elements of subordination and control, and making modifications to existing categories such as from peasant subjects to citizens and rights-holders, or from victims to survivors (Mosse, 2010; Hickey, 2010; Smith 2011; Harvey et al., 2012). In this case, research participants were cognisant of their exploitation, though whether their awareness and knowledge of any structural opportunities opened up by the political transition can be harnessed, and whether these require modifying existing categories (e.g. "here in Cap Bon we are peaceful people", interview with Ahmed) is an area for further research.

As these insights indicate, the prospects for transformative change are perhaps more distant and limited than some of the more optimistic accounts of transformative justice suggest. Efforts at transformative change, effected either through existing transitional justice mechanisms (for example Sandoval, 2017; Lambourne, 2009) or by organised social-political actors and the 'new' civil society (Gready and Robins, 2014; 2017; Robins 2013b) will require knowledge of and dealing with social relations, structures and harm-generating mechanisms which have accumulated historically, are enduring and difficult to overturn, and which have seldom been examined empirically. This implies an engagement with both materiality and cognition.

While acknowledging these difficulties, insights from social theory and practice about how change happens also act against adopting the counterview that transformative change is too complex to pursue or remote (for example as suggested by Waldorf, 2012).[89] There are grounds for remaining optimistic about transformation: clarity over the relationship between people and their structured contexts, discussed above and in chapter 3, reserves the possibility of transformative change while recognising that attaining it is no small feat.

8.2   Applying critical realism

Obtaining these research findings has involved drawing on a critical realist philosophical and methodological framework and applying techniques from grounded theory. The approach, which was set out in chapters 3 and 4, was a developed as a means of responding to the epistemological agenda identified in Chapter 2. Here, I reflect on the approach for how well it served its purpose.

As outlined in chapters 3 and 4, the methodological approach applied to the case involved the following. First, critical realism was identified as the set of meta-theoretical assumptions that

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[89] Possibly as a response to efforts at expanding the field, the transitional justice literature has begun examining the domestic political constraints to transitional justice processes in transition societies (Waldorf, 2012; 2017; McAuliffe, 2017; Duthie, 2017; Duthie and Seils, 2017) and may be on the verge of an 'institutional turn' that could dent enthusiasm for pursuing more transformative outcomes.

would guide the empirical aspects of the study. It was situated in relation to orthodox metatheories of the social sciences, namely positivism and social constructionism, that conventionally underpin social enquiry of this kind, and it was identified as one which would facilitate an in-depth exploration of 'root causes'. While meta-theoretical assumptions, or paradigms, do not require justification in the same way that methods do[90], CR's insistence on the possibility of establishing causation in open systems; on the structured, stratified and emergent nature of social reality; and its provisioning of a meta-theory of change was suggested as useful for examining the sources of harm or need frustration in this particular study. A process of social enquiry able to identify and unpack these root causes was suggested as valuable for the way it provisions us with new knowledge that can be harnessed in transformative practice.

Second, and as described in chapter 4, applying critical realism involved drawing on grounded theory methodology as a set of qualitative research techniques that begin with people's everyday lives and concerns. While grounded theory is traditionally associated with an inductive approach to theory building, the need to adopt an 'abductive' variant of the approach for this study was outlined as one which would keep the research consistent with critical realism's ontological and epistemological assumptions. In practice, this meant being able to draw on pre-existing theoretical knowledge before and during the period of data collection, as well as during the open and axial coding and analysis stages of the research. This would facilitate the development of a causal explanation that is both empirically grounded *and* theoretically informed.

How well has the approach served its purpose? As indicated by section 8.1 above, the approach succeeded in identifying a root cause, with the explanation produced being one that has the required level of causal depth sought after at the beginning of the study. This research is therefore illustrative of how one might go about generating new knowledge about 'root causes' in transition societies, and it has generally succeeded in providing a response to the epistemological agenda outlined earlier. The approach was ultimately successful in moving from an analysis of the empirical or 'concrete' experiences and realities on the plain through a mode of inference and abstraction that permitted getting at the 'real' relations, structures and mechanisms of causal interest (Table 3, Chapter 3). The relationship between concrete and

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[90] All inquiry is underpinned by one or another set of metatheoretical assumptions or paradigms which concern aspects and matters in the philosophy of science, ontology, epistemology, causation and so on. Marsh and Furlong (2002, p.17-21) suggest ontology and epistemology "are like a skin not a sweater: they cannot be put on and taken off whenever the researcher sees fit…researchers cannot adopt one position at one time for one project and another on another occasion for a different project. These positions are not interchangeable because they reflect fundamental different approaches to what social science is and how we do it."

abstract was presented in Figure 5, Chapter 4, and is now visible in Figure 16 above, where concrete 'experiences' are listed at the top of the diagram and deeper levels of reality illustrated further down. The findings have led to contributions to both the rural poverty studies literature that facilitated the development of explanatory theory and 'transformative turn' literature that framed the study problem. In respect to the latter, critical realism emerges as a powerful framework in transformative justice for examining the structural sources of harm in transition societies and through the delivery of methodological techniques that are structural, relational, and dynamic.

The critical realist orientation was essential to reaching the explanation in this study because it informed a methodological approach that would be mediated by a set of meta-theoretical concepts introduced in Chapter 3, such as causation, social structures, relations and powers and so on. The approach lent itself to the examination of needs as the phenomenon of interest alongside the experiences and meanings attached to them, and the explanation captures the components that are integral to realist explanation. Structures were introduced in Chapter 3 as groupings of internally related objects and practices which produce emergent powers and liabilities, and which can enable as well as constrain what people can do. In this study's findings, the key structures of causal interest, and their powers and liabilities, were uncovered and unpacked as a causal configuration in Chapter 7, and they feature in Figure 16. Root causes, or mechanisms, were introduced in Chapter 3 as the ways in which structured things act and make events occur through their powers and liabilities. Again, two causal mechanisms were isolated in the case and these are presented in Figure 16.

The utility of the critical realist framework for this study can be considered further by imagining how differently the research could have unfolded if grounded in the orthodox meta-theories (Appendix 1) and what this could have meant for results. Had it adopted a positivist approach, the social scientific pursuit of root causes would consist essentially of the search for regularities in the data, and would not have moved beyond examining surface-level appearances, as this study has done. A predominantly quantitative approach might have attempted to gather extensive survey data about people's needs expressed as 'wants', 'preferences' and 'demands', probably beyond the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain and from the wider region or even country as a whole. As with residual approaches to poverty outlined in Chapter 2, it would have likely meant an effort to identify individual characteristics and relationships among these characteristics that impinge on participants' capacities to satisfy their expressed 'wants' and 'preferences', as well as effect their demands through market or political mechanisms, including transitional justice processes. Qualitative studies informed by this paradigm would seek to show causation in the same way, except it would work with smaller data sets and attempt to demonstrate cause and effect through regularities between

qualitative categories. In either case, the findings would reveal relationships of significance, such as that factors like income and occupation covary with particular demands, but it would provide little about what those relationships consist of.

In an alternative scenario, a social constructionist paradigm would have likely meant forfeiting the hunt for root causes given its scepticism towards identifying these in open systems (Appendix 1). While social constructionism is a broad church, the main research questions would have looked rather different and would be geared instead towards the development of strict phenomenological accounts concerned with complex negotiations of meaning. In this case for example, such an approach would likely have drawn out the structural instantiations of 'power over'[91], which in this study has been identified and conceptualised as a mechanism (social subjugation), and the power dynamics that underpin contract making. However, it would probably have had little to say about economic exploitation since this concerns an issue of materiality. As discussed in Chapter 3 (section 3.2.1), a good deal of constructionist social science ignores materiality, or rejects or renders it a mere product of discourse. Alternatively, the research might have yielded constructivist accounts detailing how needs, subjectivity, knowledges, victimhood and so on are socially and culturally constructed among this group, as well as through transitional justice and other discourses but the same caveats would apply.

These alternative approaches can yield useful insights into different aspects of social reality which might be harnessed in root cause analysis,[92] but on their own they would lack the kind of causal depth sought after in this study. The significance, then, of identifying a root cause in this study - knowledge about which might be harnessed in projects for social change - cannot be overstated when a good deal of social scientists reject the idea of pursuing causal explanations and where causation is (problematically) taken up mainly in the quantitative social sciences as the identification of statistical regularities among sequences of events (Maxwell, 2012a; 2012b; Sayer, 2010).

A final point to be made about the utility of CR concerns how its provisioning of a meta-theory of change has clarified the dynamics underpinning the reproduction and transformation of harm-generating structures and their relationship to human agency. The lack of clarity around this issue was raised in Chapter 2 as one that has implications for any social research organised around 'transformation'. The attempt to resolve it involved adopting Roy Bhaskar's 'transformational model of social activity' and Margaret Archer's elaboration of it, introduced

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[91] Not to be confused with the critical realist (power$_1$) concept of power as potential or possibility.
[92] As discussed in Chapter 3 (section 3.2.1), critical realism is compatible with and counts on moderate forms of social constructionism. It further views the positivist search for event regularities as useful because while such studies cannot explain relationships between variables, they are able to identify relationships of significance that can be subject to qualitative enquiry.

Chapter 3, section 3.4.1. For present purposes, the theory does not stand in or act as a substitute for 'concrete' theories of change that could be developed on the El-Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain or elsewhere,[93] but has rather governed the development of new knowledge by delineating how social structures are shapers of human action, while conscious or unconscious agency shapes (or reproduces and transforms) those social structures. Put another way, it has steered the research away from either an approach that is too agent-focussed (and which can lose sight of structure) or an approach which is too structure-focussed (and which loses sight of agency) in favour of one that takes a middle ground between the two. It has helped respond to the epistemological agenda outlined in Chapter 2 and has sustained a conversation about the agent-structure iteration above (section 8.1.2) and about the barriers to change (section 8.1.3). There are also broader implications for the 'transformative turn' which are indicated in the conclusion chapter that follows.

Moving from meta-theory to methods, the successful distilling out of objects, structures, relations, powers, liabilities and mechanisms through grounded theory techniques suggests the latter's usefulness for root cause analysis and applied critical realism more generally. As explained in Chapter 4, some critical realists reject GT techniques on the grounds of its 'naïve empiricism', yet this study has illustrated how harnessing more recent developments in GT, namely the shift towards abduction and the possibility of handling preconceived analytical categories, allowed its techniques to be employed in a way that is consistent with CR's ontological and epistemological assumptions. The study's retrofitting of GT's axial coding strategy with CR concepts marked a departure from the conventional 'coding paradigm' developed by Strauss (1987). As non-empirical social objects, potentials and structures were not self-evident in the data and so their presence had to be carefully inferred from it. This required building on earlier microanalyses conducted during the open coding stage to compare and connect objects and practices (such as crop types, repayment schedules and so on), and the meanings attached to them (exploitation, instrumentalisation and so on) in each case and across cases. To my knowledge, this is the first applied CR study to have coded in this way. The literature's only other illustration of a 'critical realist grounded theory' (Kempster and Parry, 2014) draws on different techniques and did not harness the more recent developments in GT around abduction, as outlined in Chapter 4 (section 4.3).

This abductive approach required drawing on rather than avoiding pre-existing theory throughout all research stages, and this gave shape to the research prior to fieldwork and provided multiple frames of reference through which gathered data could be recontextualised or redescribed. In this respect, most of the literature which went on to inform the development

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[93] Although theories of change are lacking in transformative justice practice as well (McAuliffe, 2017).

of explanatory theory (and which was presented in Chapter 2, section 2.3) was identified and narrowed down over the course of data collection and analysis rather than decided upon up front. Experiences of physical and psychological suffering, presented in chapter 6 and illustrated in Figure 16, were identified in the data as realist 'demi-regularities' (Chapter 6, footnote 49) by way of constant comparison of data segments, while the axial coding techniques connected these to the objects, structures and powers of causal interest. The result of combining these observations with theory from the literature on needs and the critical literature on rural development led to retroducing the two general mechanisms described in 8.1 above. Without this theory-data iteration, it is difficult to see how these mechanisms could have been identified.

8.3   Summary

This chapter began by drawing on the findings from chapters 6 and 7 to present and discuss an explanation for the needs of sharecroppers on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain. The explanation was presented in parts:

- that there is a tendency for sharecroppers on the plain to experience physical and psychological suffering in terms of and associated with low incomes and consumption, overwork and fatigue, perpetual indebtedness, uncertainty, loss of control, unfair prices, a limited sense of worth, a lack of meaningful work and a lack of alternative livelihood choices;

- that sharecroppers' suffering is a source of resentment directed toward private actors and the state, and underpins priorities for improvements to incomes and consumption, fairer and more equitable relationships, agricultural development and employment and improvements to safety and personal security;

- that needs are unmet or frustrated on account of being inserted into enduring social relations which are the basis of two main mechanisms: economic exploitation and social subjugation. The explanation suggests these mechanisms are active.

These social relations which form the conditions or context in which livelihoods are pursued were described as are nested within higher-level macro-conditions that include generalised commodity production and market exchange; state retreat; and state regulation. The various facets of this explanation were presented in Figure 16. Why these relations persist was discussed in terms of the agency-structure iteration, with the view that farmers on the plain contribute to the reproduction of these relations and structures as a means of satisfying their basic needs - even if this means other needs are routinely unmet or frustrated as a result. These findings were suggested as ones that support the re-emerging significance of class in rural poverty studies and which illustrate that the psychosocial dimensions of need frustration can

be rooted in class mechanisms of subjugation and exploitation. For the 'transformative turn', class and context were identified as significant to the needs of populations, communities and groups in transition societies and implications were suggested for approaches that fail to engage with these. This discussion culminated into a response to the problem identified in Chapter 2 that the call for transformative change has not considered its structural barriers. In this vein, the chapter went on to discuss social transformation and the barriers to change in reference to the case, outlining a number of examples of them. Finally, it discussed the application of critical realism as having succeeded in responding to the epistemological agenda identified in Chapter 2 for the development transformative justice knowledge, drawing out the role of its metatheoretical components and how these supported the application of grounded theory techniques.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

This thesis challenges the direction of the 'transformative turn' scholarship which theorises towards the international transitional justice community and its values (McAuliffe, 2017). It offers an alternative that is oriented towards building new knowledge about the sorts of social arrangements that are harm-generating for particular populations, communities and groups in transition societies. This shift was suggested as more useful for practice. In what follows, the main contributions of this study are identified and a practice orientation and directions for future research are set out. The chapter begins by briefly revisiting the research problem and the research findings before moving on to discuss the contributions. These contributions are identified in terms of the case and i) the fields of rural poverty studies; and (ii) the 'transformative turn'; while (iii) a further, more abstract, contribution is suggested as a reconceptualised transformative justice that draws on CR concepts. This reconceptualised transformative justice is grounded in a definition of transformation that makes it more useful to research and practice, and which specifies a relationship between each where the former is incorporated alongside the latter on the basis of its 'underlabouring' role for transformation. The chapter reflects on some limitations of this study and outlines a practice orientation and directions for future research.

9.1   Research problem

Identifying the research problem and addressing it through this study has been an effort at contributing to and advancing the transformative justice agenda (Gready and Robins, 2014a; 2014b; 2017; Evans, 2016) that has emerged as part of the 'transformative turn' in transitional justice. The research problem addressed in this study was identified at the beginning in terms of two limitations in the transformative turn literature. The first was that it provides little conceptually and methodologically for generating new knowledge about the underlying or 'root causes' of unmet or frustrated need in transition societies, and that this was problematic since the turn has been about addressing wider, societal harms than conventionally dealt with by transitional justice. This phenomenon was referred to as the turn's 'epistemological gap', and was suggested as arising as a result of the direction of transformative theorising, which has been concerned to highlight to the international community what it lacks, what it overlooks and making the case that it should respond. The second limitation was that the turn refers to 'transformation' in a vague and undertheorised way, often appearing to mean little more than deeper and more thorough change for overcoming 'structural violence', 'structures', 'power relations' and so on. While useful perhaps in a discussion about the limitations of transitional justice, this undertheorisation was suggested as problematic for empirical research concerned with transformation since it furnishes little idea of what social change is and how it happens,

why change might not happen and why states of affair may persist. This undertheorisation was viewed as a consequence of the turn's distance from the social theoretical work on transformation and emancipation, which addresses the dynamics of continuity and change.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 identified how these problems would be tackled in this study. Chapter 2 set out an agenda for empirically investigating the needs of communities and groups in political transition. An approach and a set of research questions was developed and presented over Chapters 3 and 4 and applied to the case of rural labour on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain. Two core research questions were suggested, the first of which was descriptive and the second causal:

- What are the needs of sharecropping farmers on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain? Why are their needs frustrated?

These core questions were followed by a set of sub-questions:

- How can the causes of need frustration be examined?
- What evidence is there for the frustration of particular needs?
- What are sharecroppers' grievances and priorities for change?
- What are the mechanisms and conditions under which these needs are frustrated?

The suggested approach was an exploratory one that would aim to apply critical realism (Bhaskar, 2016; Sayer, 2010) using techniques from grounded theory (Oliver, 2011; Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

9.2   Case findings

Through applying the framework and approach, the case identified sharecroppers on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain as a specific needs-bearing group with particular grievances and agendas for change rooted in the rural economy. The findings suggested that this group, as labourers, have unmet or frustrated needs for social-economic security, relatedness, for esteem and self-worth and for self-realisation, and that this flows from the way they are inserted into enduring social relations that exploit and subjugate them. Economic exploitation and social subjugation were the two causal mechanisms retroduced through the study as depriving people of access to material and non-material objects for satisfying needs: economic exploitation referred to the practice of one group extracting wealth from another while social subjugation referred to being coerced or commanded and occurs when labour is exposed to sets of disciplines and compulsions that shape production and exchange and set limits to capacities for action. These unmet or frustrated needs were experienced, as everyday class oppression, in terms of low incomes and consumption, overwork and fatigue, perpetual indebtedness, uncertainty, loss of control, unfair prices, a limited sense of worth, a lack of meaningful work

and a lack of alternative livelihood opportunities. Further, these experiences were found to be source of resentment directed toward private actors and the state, and yielded priorities for change among research participants that emphasised improvements to incomes and consumption, fairer and more equitable relationships, agricultural development and employment, and improvements to safety and personal security.

9.3   Contributions

9.3.1   Rural poverty studies

From these findings, several contributions at the level of the case are made to the literature on rural poverty studies as the substantive area. As discussed in Chapter 8, the identification of sharecroppers' needs for social-economic security, relatedness, for esteem and self-worth and for self-realisation as consequences of class mechanisms of exploitation and subjugation supports the re-emerging significance of class in rural poverty studies (Campling et al., 2016; Pattenden et. al., 2017; Hickey, 2010; da Corta, 2010). While class has been all but excised from academic literature in general, it emerges here as significant for both its material and psychosocial consequences. The study moreover adds to, as well as supports, the critical literature on rural contract making (Clapp, 1994; ActionAid, 2015; Oya, 2012; Bhaduri, 1986; Byres, 1983; McMichael, 2013b; Porter and Phillips-Howard, 1997; Raynolds, 2000; Steffen and Echánove, 2005) which aims to get beneath surface appearances of partnership, social harmony and so on towards the underlying antagonisms and inequalities that underwrite such exchanges. It shows how other, less tangible factors like autonomy and recognition are part and parcel of rural exchanges alongside material resources, and that these can also be compromised through exchanges such as these. These reveal the limitations of residual approaches which are unable (or perhaps unwilling) to move beyond the empirical level of reality, as defined in Bhaskar's stratified ontology (Table 3, Chapter 3), and hence to generate a description of the world that cuts across stratified reality. As the findings have suggested, these accounts are difficult to sustain when participants themselves viewed contracts as strategies rather than as straightforward 'win-win' arrangements or which provisioned for the fair distribution of risks and resources. In the absence of alternative livelihood opportunities, participants consent, season after season, to their exploitation and compromising of autonomy, with antagonisms and grievances remaining prominent under the surface.

9.3.2   The 'transformative turn'

The is the first intensive study of the needs of poor farmers in a country transitioning to democracy, and which is set in the debates about post-conflict and post-repression practice. As explained in Chapter 1, this research is oriented towards the study of transition societies and considers transformation narrowly in terms of post-repression/post-conflict practice. For the 'transformative turn', findings from the case point the transformative literature towards

class and context as significant and overlooked mediators of need satisfaction among groups, communities and populations in transition societies. This is significant for an emerging field of practice and scholarship organised around addressing social and economic injustices in transition societies. The value of this theoretic is threefold, and should be of interest to academics and practitioners working in transformative justice and transition more broadly.

In the first instance, it allows the extent of need frustration to be more fully understood and examined in particular cases, where everyday class oppression may be the main source of material and psychosocial illbeing. While the transformative literature on economic violence (e.g. Sharp, 2014) has, rightly, emphasised social and economic rights violations, corruption and plunder, what these perspectives have overlooked are the more mundane, social mechanisms of poverty creation and which involve people's inclusion into, as well as marginalisation and exclusion from, processes and trajectories of development. This is a useful corrective that can register and draw out what the needs of labour are in times of transition, and to connect these to ongoing social-economic processes.

In the second instance, raising the analytic profile of class and context relations, structures and mechanisms lends itself to examinations of how particular sources of illbeing might continue and/or be reconfigured over periods of repression to political transition and finally to peace. This includes human agency and how it might be circumscribed, and why efforts at transformative change in a transition might be stunted in the face of structural barriers. For Tunisia, a number of studies have drawn attention to the rural-urban class character of the 2010/11 uprising and its sectoral mobilisations (Gana, 2011; 2012; 2013; 2016; Ayeb, 2012; Zemni, 2015; Merone, 2015; Allinson, 2015; Beinin, 2015; 2016), and the findings here provide further evidence that, rather than abating, rural class antagonisms have remained pervasive over the course of the country's political transition (Gana, 2012). For rural (and even urban) populations, the rootedness or connectedness of these in longer processes of agrarian transition supports expanding consideration of change processes beyond the political sphere (i.e. authoritarianism or conflict to democracy and peace) and into the social and economic (Gready and Robins, 2014a), meaning an examination of local, regional and national patterns and processes of agrarian change. This move invites new, transformative questions not only about the quality of emerging democracies, representation and so on for people with rural-based livelihoods, but ones that consider the trajectory and quality of rural development, its institutions and sustainability. Indeed, renewed social mobilisation in Tunisia since 2011, such as the recent 'Fesh Nestannew?' ('What are we waiting for?) campaign in 2017/18, has brought much of this to public attention already: that the country's development

model remains largely unchanged and that change processes at the level of the state have not translated into new economic opportunities for ordinary Tunisians.

And third, the theoretic pushes the transformative literature towards a more critical engagement with the particular kinds of structural and relational antagonisms, rooted in the rural economy, that can facilitate or underpin social conflict and violence. The antagonisms identified in this study are class-based and are rooted in relations between local actors involved in the production and exchange of resources, as described in previous chapters. Despite there being an extensive literature on the topic from the field of agrarian political economy, the literatures on conflict and transitional justice from which the transformative turn arose have, rather strikingly, said little or nothing about rurality, nor considered what it might mean for practice. More relevant perhaps, grievances and antagonisms rooted in the rural economy have recently become associated with a lack of 'buy-in' for democratic institutions and a global rise of authoritarian populism (Scoones et al., 2017) that can circumvent and undermine democracies and civil society. Though Tunisia's governing coalition can hardly be described as authoritarian populist, rural grievances of the kind identified here are pertinent. Farmers have come to view the Revolution and the transition in wholly negative terms, frequently expressing frustration with the new Tunisian state and, on occasion, a nostalgia for the old order. From their standpoint, the new state shares with the old regime a perception that it is distant, neglectful and unresponsive to people's needs, and they lament the lack of state support and its failure to regulate relations between themselves and more powerful actors. As discussed in Chapter 8, grievances and antagonisms of these kinds are known in agrarian political economy to be a source of mobilisation for peaceful social change, such as the aforementioned Fesh Nestannew? campaign, but they are also a known source of conflict and violence, and can be exploited by populist and violent groups.

9.3.3 Transformative justice

At the more abstract level, the findings and contributions cohere around, and can be synthesised into a reconceptualised and critical realist-informed transformative justice (Figure 17). This reconceptualisation incorporates the CR concepts employed in this study and offers something above existing uses in the 'transformative turn' (Lambourne, 2008; Evans, 2016; Gready and Robins, 2014a; Sandoval, 2017), which have seldom drawn on social theory. In the following definition, italics are used for highlighting CR concepts:

> that transformative justice is a politics or practice of positive social change that consists of the *transformation* of harm-generating *relations, structures* and *practices* as opposed to their *reproduction*. Transformations involve the *modification* of these social objects or their *replacement* with alternatives that are more conducive to

people's wellbeing (Bhaskar, 2009; 2016). Their replacement means the direct application or construction of alternatives while modifications usually involve retaining some structural elements intact but reconfiguring existing relations in ways that cancel out, offset or change their effects. For a transformative practice, this work consists of and is organised around the *activation* or expansion of the *powers* of structurally disadvantaged people, which includes their *agency*. [94] Social enquiry assists by demonstrating how, in a given case, there are one or more unmet needs and that some obstacle stands in the way of its being satisfied (Collier, 1994). Decisions over whether and how that obstacle should be removed lies in the realm of practice and deliberation, as discussed in section 9.5 below.

This reconceptualisation is illustrated in Figure 17 as a synthesis of the key elements in this study. What it offers is a new relationship between research and practice, the value of which lies in allowing for the generation of new practical projects for transformation in transition societies. With this reconceptualization, transformative justice can be done differently because it draws the transformative project away from approaching change as an expanded or "revised approach to justice among scholars and practitioners" and a concern for its "own debates, norms, institutions and values" (McAuliffe, 2017, p.xi). New practical projects are generated by the discovery of unmet need and its obstacles in particular cases in transition societies, while transformative justice might intervene in ongoing projects through its provision of new insights and possible directions that might be harnessed by social actors. As such, the relationship between research and practice can be specified here as one where the former can be incorporated alongside the latter on the basis of an 'underlabouring' role for transformation (Bhaskar, 2008; Collier, 1994). That is to say, the role of transformative research in transformative justice is not one of effecting transformation, which instead lies in the realm of practice, but rather of 'underlabouring' (Bhaskar, 2016; Collier, 1994; Danermark et al., 1997) for it through the development of social scientific knowledge about the structural sources or root causes of harm, as well as the relations, powers, liabilities and so on. This knowledge can be imparted to people, organisations, movements and groups to consider and act upon, if they so wish. The production of these explanations is a precondition for criticising and changing harm-generating relations and structures, while "sometimes it *is* criticizing them, and beginning the work of their subversion" (Collier, 1994, p.172, original in italics).

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[94] For example, the rise of trade unions in Britain occurred within a system of generalised commodity production but transformed industrial relations by substituting vertical employer-worker relationships with horizontal associational relations (Archer, 2015b). The thrust of the research participants' priorities for change in this study, presented in Chapter 6 (Table 11), has suggested modifications to existing relations that strengthen their positions vis-à-vis other actors while retaining other elements intact

What is significant about this reconceptualisation is that it is grounded in a definition of 'transformation' that is conceptually strong and empirically useful. This is as opposed to the rather vague and undertheorised conceptualisations on offer in the transformative scholarship, which appear to mean little more than deeper and more thorough change (e.g. Lambourne and Carreon, 2016; Gready and Robins, 2014a; 2014b; Evans, 2016; Sandoval, 2017). For concrete research, it specifies the relationship between agents and their structured contexts, allowing research to examine why harms, as a concern of the field, might persist and how their structural sources might be transformed. The theory does not stand in or act as a substitute for theories of change developed in concrete contexts, but rather supports efforts to develop new knowledge about the patterned, intentional, unintentional and reiterated activities of the particular agents implicated in social structures that are harm-generating. For future research in the field, it provides a conceptual or metatheoretical framework by which some of transformative turn's rhetorical vocabulary, like "structural violence and systemic violence" (Gready and Robins, 2014b) "power relations" (Miller, 2008, p.281) and "power structures" (Sandoval, 2017, p.171), can harnessed and empirically examined in transition societies. This is as opposed to continuing merely to employ these concepts without empirical content as items in a field of intervention that practice should respond to.

The research and practice relationship and approach to transformation hinges on recognising that all forms of practice are concept-dependent, meaning actors must be holding some idea or theory of what they are doing, and hence that they are prone to building on false, mistaken or distorted beliefs which can be subsequently revised. Where transformative research reveals the consequences of class exploitation to illbeing for example, it not only raises this as relevant but confronts the idea that the social and economic dimensions of transition are best addressed by assisting in processes of 'development', such as by asking questions about what *kinds* of development and whose interests do these processes serve. New knowledge intervenes at the level of concepts, or the ideas or theories that underpin and inform practice, and explanations are valued for how they help conceptualise and deal with particular social problems as opposed to how they contribute to the discipline or theory. This new direction for transformative research does not mean to reproduce a problematic division of labour between 'thinking' and 'doing' however, as though underlabouring lies merely in the purview of the 'thinkers', nor does it amount to a call for turning away from concrete research in favour of abstract theorising. A form of knowledge production and division of labour of these kinds would be undesirable, and the latter would anyway be barely applicable to this field since its participants are often academics engaged in practice. Rather, it is a call for problem-based modes of enquiry that contribute to the interfacing of theory and practice and which are at once empirically grounded and theoretically informed.

Transformative justice

Critical response to transitional justice;

social-economic harms, structural violence etc.;

theorising toward international transtional justice community;

practice agendas

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1. Research problem

Epistemological gap;

transformation vague and undertheorised (general lack of social ontology)

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2. Framework and approach

critical realism;

grounded theory techniques

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4. Reconceptualised transformative justice

incorporates epistemological agenda alongside practice agendas;

research underlabours for practice;

grounded in a critical realist social ontology, defines structural reproduction and transformation;

social relational (class and context);

acknowledges the barriers to change

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3. Case of sharecroppers and their needs

social context - agrarian structures;

social class - mechanisms of exploitation, subjugation

*Figure 17. Reconceptualised transformative justice.*

Contributions at this interfacing extend beyond the knowledge-practice field of the 'transformative turn' and transitional justice to the practices of institutions, organisations, networks, movements and groups that might drive transformative change (Evans, 2015; 2016; Gready and Robins, 2017). As part of civil society or the 'new civil society' (Gready and

Robins, 2017), these actors tend as well to straddle this 'thinking' and 'doing' in their work, drawing on academic knowledge and engaging in knowledge production activities for their projects. Institutions and organisations occasionally recruit academics for this purpose, while some social movements train grassroots intellectual-activists and produce knowledge in ways that are not all that dissimilar from academics, employing the same technical language and similar publication practices (Edelman, 2009). In rural social movements, scholar-activists from the outside have been involved in formulating movement strategy and carrying out research and training on their behalf, such as in the Florestan Fernandes school in Brazil for instance, which is attached to the Brazil's Landless Workers' Movement.[95] The main role of such work is not to feed back into the academic sphere but to inform advocacy, framing and education activities which aim to change social practices by redescribing and revising the 'common-sense' ideas and beliefs that underpin them, and which ideally involve fostering dialogue and processes of reflexivity (Freire, 2005). Much of the ideational work of rural social movements in the Global South, to return to the above example, has involved confronting popular ideas of poverty, often propagated by social elites, that it is a consequence of individual failing rather than of the social arrangements that position some groups more favourably and in ways that permit them to accrue benefits at the expense of others. These advocacy, framing and education activities are distinct social processes but they all hinge on some measure of hitherto produced explanatory knowledge, formal or otherwise, and critique of some aspect of the status quo. In this vein, this reconceptualised transformative justice is consistent with other calls (e.g. Gready and Robins, 2017) for modes of practice that do away with professional distance from communities and lingering ambivalences towards community-based organisations, movements and networks.

9.4 Limitations of the study

While the framework and approach have shown their efficacy, there are nevertheless some limitations of which have implications for the explanation. As presented in Chapter 8, section 8.1, the picture generated is one that captures the micro-level structural dynamics of need frustration on the plain, meaning sharecroppers on the plain and their immediate social and political context. Since the explanation is a highly local one it does not examine connecting and interpenetrating social structures across and at higher and even lower scales. In respect to lower scale structures, the most important of these in this case would be family and kinship structures and their relation to livelihoods (such as how they shape the division of labour). GT is perfectly able to work with these, but these lower scale structures could not be examined in

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[95] Here, a cadre of volunteer scholar-activists from at home and abroad are involved in the training of grassroots intellectual-activists through the delivery of courses on topics such as rural sociology, political economy and management.

any amount of detail here owing to the lack of data and sampling difficulties, as discussed in Chapter 4 (section 4.5.2). Specifically, it was not possible to sample a higher number of female research participants within the study, and when we did it was common for older male family members, usually husbands, to intervene and position themselves at the centre of the interview.

This absence of a gender lens is perhaps the most significant limitation of the study in terms of process, because the findings reflect the voices of some people more than others, and because of what we know about how men's and women's experiences of farming and poverty differ from each other. As a wealth of literature in agrarian studies has shown and argued (e.g. Kabeer, 1991; Razavi 2003; 2009; Mangongo and da Corta, 2011; Park et al., 2015; Levien, 2017) the ways in which gender shapes access to resources and the process of securing them means that the structural and relational sources of poverty can be quite different. Unequal access to land and farming incomes for instance are known mechanisms that facilitate the poverty and subordination of rural woman (e.g Razavi, 2003). As discussed in Chapter 5 as well, gender disaggregated variables in national poverty data indicate the gendered nature of poverty and of rural poverty in Tunisia, and support arguments concerning the feminisation of poverty in the country (AFTD, 2014; Ministry of Women, Family and Children, 2016). In this study, the emphasis given to men's voices over women's invites the homogenising tendencies characteristic of earlier rural research, where women's experiences and circumstances are reduced to men's (or the 'household'). It has limitations for transformative justice insofar as some voices have been able to speak more loudly than others.

In the end, I adopt a reserved position as to the status of knowledge claims in this study: I emphasise that the knowledge generated must be held as providing a *partial and incomplete picture* of stratified reality, particularly given what we know about the role of gender, and that the findings should, like all realist research, be considered *fallible and revisable in light of further research, data and findings*. Addressing this gap in a future research project along similar lines would go a significant way in providing a more complete picture.

In retrospect, how might this have been addressed within the limitations of the project? Anticipating in advance the challenge of sampling female farmers, the organisation of one or two all-women focus groups would have done much to get around these difficulties, providing insights beyond those revealed through the other 42 interviews. A venue could have been hired for several hours and the participants given compensation and travel reimbursement for their participation. As mentioned in 4.5.2, focus groups were discussed with AFTURD prior to fieldwork (albeit not as a mechanism for addressing this particular problem) but this was ruled out for reasons of resources: namely financial, because the project was already over budget, and the lack of group facilitation skills in Arabic among myself and the interpreter-research

assistant. At the same time, the organisation was keen at the outset to emphasise as high a number of interviews as possible, viewing this as important for representativeness and research rigor. Were I to do the research again within the same constraints, I would try to show more persuasively why good social research does not necessarily require generalising to larger populations, and I would seek to reduce the number of individual interviews to perhaps as low as 10 or 15 in favour of one or two intensive focus group sessions. Ideally, this would create more space for the voices of female research participants and would allow drawing out the missing the invariant elements mentioned above: family and kinship structures and their relation to livelihoods. It would also free up resources for a focus group facilitator with experience working on gender.

With sampling issues addressed however, there is another question of how far I would be able to analyse the data in a gender-sensitive way within the limitations of this independent research project. Addressing the issue of sampling, after all, does not mean that the research is inherently gender-sensitive. As a male researcher with a modest awareness of the significance of gender sensitivity, my estimate is that the conclusions from such research would remain modest as well. This is in light of coming to the research project with a limited theoretical, methodological and practical background in gender, and an awareness of the need for additional training on this. Reflecting back on my experience as a doctoral student, I think some core training at the outset on how to make our research gender-sensitive would have been enormously beneficial for conducting the project. A workshop programme for example could be open for all doctoral students to provide training on how data can be analysed in a gender-sensitive way, as well as to how it informs the formulation of research questions; how methodologies can be made gender-sensitive, including practical insights for fieldwork; and how the findings and research is reported. Ultimately, the research questions might be better pursued as part of a collaborative rather than independent endeavour and as one that counts on a good measure of practical, theoretical and methodological expertise in gender.

If one gap concerns gender relations, others might include generation, ethnicity and race as shapers of need which can interact with class or which exist apart from class altogether. While the novelty of this study lies in its identification of class and how it operates as a mediator of needs for the transformative literature, people generally have a wide set of needs whose satisfaction or frustration is not determined or shaped exclusively by class relations. Human needs for love for example, which some psychologists and philosophers have suggested exists (e.g. Maslow, 1954), are thought to be satisfied through family and community mechanisms. As such, the answer this study provides should not be read as all-encompassing, either as a full account of need frustration nor their sources, but as a study that deals more narrowly with the needs of labour through a class lens. One of the values of the philosophical and

methodological approach adopted in the study is that it can be picked up and used to examine these other relations, with the difference lying in the substantive areas from which pre-existing theoretical knowledge is derived (e.g. feminist theory instead of rural poverty studies).

Examining cross-scale and higher-scale structures and processes within the case is trickier, and if desirable within the same research project would have required additional data and data gathering and analytical techniques. This is because while local level interview data is useful and rich for what is happening in a locale and what people make of their situation, it can tell us by itself very little about what is going on at other scales, such as the way local dynamics are being shaped by the ways in which global institutions discipline and coerce national economies and governments or the way national economies have been incorporated into the world economy. The choice to keep the local in the foreground while aiming for causal depth has in any case required making connections between these micro-level findings (i.e. the three main structures identified in Chapter 7) and higher-level processes (generalised commodity production and market exchange, state regulation and state retreat) that have already been examined in the existing literature, and which were introduced in Chapter 5 and described in Chapter 8, section 8.1.1. Structures are nested in other structures, and are constituted by macro and micro processes that are also historical. This study has sought to capture this. Sayer (2010, p.168) suggests linking in this way is an acceptable practice in applied CR because the multitude and complexity of social structures, and their connections and interpenetrations means that analyses may require

> *reference to things lying beyond the boundaries of the object as originally defined and hence an expansion of an already complex field of study. So, for example, we may find that a subject like the condition of the poor in the East End of London in the nineteenth century will require repeated references to phenomena which lay outside this area and yet were causally connected to it, such as British imperialism […] inevitably the best that can be produced is a narrative supported by some results of extensive surveys (or fragments thereof), a few intensive 'case studies' and a host of statements about relatively simple constituent elements or events, all informed by abstract theoretical knowledge.*

There is also an ethical implication that comes from failing to account for these structures and processes insofar as research aims to underlabour for transformation. Not only is the explanation a more incomplete one without them, but it risks construing need frustration on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain as a purely 'Tunisian problem' existing in isolation from the inequities in the global economy and its architects. As millions of activists in rural social movements around the world know, local problems and tensions are rarely ever purely local,

and social movement efforts to unleash a transformative politics will often combine local level struggles, such as against a hegemonic landowning elite, with national and global campaigning and advocacy on issues of trade agreements, food sovereignty, peasant rights, and so on.

A further limitation concerns the fallibility of knowledge produced by CR enquiry (as well as all forms of enquiry), and follows from the above discussion about underlabouring. While the aim is to produce knowledge for transformation, that knowledge is not infallible and as such should be disseminated and made open to critique and subject to revision. This includes by the research participants as well as academic peers, as Kempster and Parry (2014) have suggested. For practical reasons however, the explanation presented in Chapter 8 has not been tested with the participants on the El Haouaria-Dar Allouche plain, though facets of it have been presented at various stages to peers, including the local partner organisation (AFTURD) and the research assistant. This is not fatal to the explanation however as this represents a further stage of inquiry or practice rather than having the explanation validated or approved: CR approaches are intended to be critical of their objects such that the perspectives of researchers and research participants (both as actors in social practices) may diverge (Parr, 2015).

With that in mind, the research findings to not automatically yield imperatives i.e. particular actions for transformative change, but rather a more modest 'practice orientation' that points towards possible next steps, and which is presented below. The reason for this is rather straight forward. Without testing explanations with communities first, incorporating them into participatory, action research or consultative processes, or disseminating and making it available to organisations, movements and groups to consider for example, those with epistemic authority risk producing imperatives that lead to worse results. The development field for instance is replete with examples of prescriptions that have ended up doing more harm than good. In this study for example, the landlord-tenant relation was examined as a method of surplus appropriation and this would seem to suggest action to abolish it. However, moving from an evaluation to an imperative in favour of its removal would overlook whether that relation sustains other practices or relations that are conducive to participants' wellbeing, and more significantly perhaps what an appropriate alternative would be (Sayer, 1997).

One way of possibly beginning to close this gap would be to have conducted this research in a participatory or action research mode from the outset that would aim to effect change in local contexts. The possibility of adopting a more participatory approach was examined when this research commenced, though for different reasons, but was ruled out because of resources and the sheer difficulty of conducting fieldwork in rural Egypt and Tunisia. Such an approach would likely be useful however, and would involve generating explanatory knowledge for

action while retaining the possibility of judging between better or worse knowledge (Parr, 2015). Reconciling the epistemological and ontological assumptions of critical realism with this mode of research is ongoing work (Houston, 2010), but there are illustrations of successful applications in other fields (e.g. Ram et al., 2014).

9.5   Practice orientation and future research

A more modest practice orientation is suggested then which is development-focussed, and which would involves using these findings as a basis for fostering 'communities of practice' through inclusive, participatory and consultative processes in the area around the particular problems raised. These processes could be research-oriented as suggested above, or organised around community-based development initiatives, such as practiced by Tunisian national and international development organisations. The issues raised in this study and participants' priorities for change underscore the developmental nature of the task at hand: improvements to incomes and consumption; fairer and more equitable relationships between the various actors implicated in production and exchange; agricultural development and employment opportunities, and improvements to safety and personal security. Such processes and any research attached to them may also deepen the understanding of need frustration by shedding more light onto other classes of labour and how class intersects with gender and generation, and what consequences flow from it. Existing theory and empirical work in Tunisia (e.g. ONU Femmes, 2014) suggests these relations are significant and some observations during fieldwork indicate they matter on the plain as well, but there is little that can be said about them here without further research. Issues of race and ethnicity did not emerge as relevant in the study area and nothing in the data suggested it might be, though hierarchies of race and ethnicity are quite prevalent in Tunisia and are likely to intersect with class elsewhere.

One likely useful line of inquiry and practice would be to take up participants' suggestions for modifying existing relations by exploring the potential for fostering independent producer or grassroots organisations in the region (Oxfam, 2007; Moyo and Yeros, 2007). There is a fair amount of development literature on producer organisations that might be drawn on for insight (e.g. Shiferaw et al., 2011) though these are often underpinned by residual perspectives on poverty and should be approached with that in mind. A number of participants suggested that genuinely independent organisations might strengthen their position vis-à-vis other actors through the introduction of new causal powers for contract making: being able to speak and be heard and powers to make complaints and seek redress. Processes fostering the development of these powers might yield tangible results in terms of preventing unfair practices by suppliers and processors, such as reneging on their purchase commitments, and allowing disputes to be resolved or more fairly resolved. Success in this area may serve as a springboard for further advocacy and change in the region and elsewhere, such by allowing

the promotion of farmers' rights and advocating for state support, promoting more sustainable farming practices, like agroecology, and moving farmers away from dependency on expensive chemical inputs and seeds. Alternatively, its operation might serve to provide farmers with the conditions to leave agriculture entirely, should they choose to do so. Though Cap Bon does not carry the same 'development urgency' as some other parts of Tunisia, such as the poorer interior regions, and might therefore rank lower on the scale of development priorities, it is worth noting that the success of such projects would also matter in terms of lessons learned for elsewhere in the country. The emergence rural movements for progressive social change in countries where these are strong is often identified with initial advocacy and organisation in wealthier regions which later extends to other areas.[96]

A more research-oriented agenda along these lines would look to explore evidence of or to foster some measure transformative agency through the development of these communities of practice. Exploring these in 'strategic-relational' terms (Jessop, 2005) would involve taking some of the barriers to change and focussing on participants' assessment and responses to their strategic context, and the opportunities and choices it provides in terms of their identities, strategies, and spatial and temporal horizons. It could ask questions and promote reflexivity about the range of potential courses of action, choices and strategies available to rural people in their strategic terrain; how they are responding to that strategic terrain; what variables might explain differentiation in opportunities, constraints and responses. In a very realist way, it could also ask what opportunities and responses might exist independently of participants' perceptions (e.g. Victor et al., 2013). For example, research participants in this study, as noted earlier, recognised that freedom of speech existed in the transition but they did not view it as valuable given the lack of avenues through which they could make their voices heard. Research and practice of these kinds that focus on rural populations, communities and groups should aim to build bridges with the agrarian political economy literature that has examined 'agrarian violence', conflict, and authoritarian populism (Cramer and Richards, 2011; Scoones et al., 2017) and learn from its methods.[97] There remains a problematic disconnect between this literature and the transformative turn, largely owing to the different epistemic roots of each. If addressed, this promises to enhance transformative research and bring new ideas and approaches to practice.

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[96] In the case of Brazil's MST, its emergence in the 1980s was associated with the country's wealthier southern states which have a legacy of family farming driven in large part by European immigration in earlier centuries. Over the 1980s and 1990s, the movement territorialised into other areas of the country, such as the poorer northeast which has a different development trajectory characterised by legacies of sharecropping and slave labour (Fernandes, 2008; Wolford, 2010).

[97] Such as longitudinal and PANEL studies for instance.

To reiterate the larger picture about research directions, which has been touched upon in several places in this chapter, one of the more useful things researchers can do and which is suggested in this practice orientation is to underlabour for transformation through the development of new knowledge about the relational and structural sources of harms. The transformative turn has set its sights on addressing lingering social and economic injustices in transition societies, but its research remains primarily normative with constructivist theorising directed towards the international transitional justice community and its values, the limitations of liberal statebuilding, and a general need to expand the ambitions of practice to respond to wider issues (McAuliffe, 2017; Friedman, 2017). As the need for more ambitious outcomes becomes increasingly accepted, a shift is required from researching (and publishing) *on the need for* transformative justice, towards researching *for* transformation. Doing this requires empirically grounded and theoretically informed research that sheds light onto 'root causes' in concrete contexts and which can inform efforts to overcome them.

Appendices

Appendix 1

1a. Meta-theories for the social sciences

Meta-theories for the social sciences		
Positivism	**Social constructionism**	**Critical realism**
Ontology • World unstructured, only individual actors • Patterns of atomistic events • Single reality • What exists is what can be observed and measured • No social construction • Essentialism	• What exists is socially constructed • Discourses, social conventions • Multiple realities • Non-essentialist	• What exists is independent of whatever we know or think about it • Natural and social objects consist of mechanisms (causal powers and liabilities) that produce events • Reality stratified and emergent, single reality but multiple interpretations • Structure-agency interactions • Mild essentialism
Epistemology • Knowledge developed through observation and measurement (five human senses) • Absolute truth • Rejects relativism	• Epistemological relativity • Judgmental relativity • Truth is relative	• Knowledge developed by unearthing objects, causal mechanisms and/or the conditions in which they operate • Epistemological relativity but rejects judgmental relativity • Truth a matter of 'practical adequacy' (Sayer 2010)
Causation • Humean 'secessionist' view of causation as statistical regularities among sequences of events • Causation can be established in the social world • Causal factors rather than causal processes; regularities as laws	• Accepts positivist view but multiple, simultaneous causes in the social world and sceptical about possibility of identifying causes	• Causation as causal mechanisms which may or may not be activated, and which may not produce event regularities. • Causation can be established in the social world but with difficulty; knowledge is fallible • 'Tendencies' rather than regularities • Causal processes rather than causal factors
Explanation • Prediction	• knowledge, realities etc. socially constructed	• Causal
Methodology • Variables rather than objects • Observation, experimentation, prediction	• Interpretation, understanding meanings, culture, symbols, identities etc.	• Interpret, postulate objects, relations, structures, causal mechanisms and how they work and under what conditions
Methods • Quantitative, statistics, regression etc.	• Vast, qualitative	• Mixed methods but mainly qualitative
Theory • Role is to order, explain, predict	• Rejects positivist view of theory. Theories valid in terms of how useful they are	• Role is to describe objects, structures, causal mechanisms etc.
Reasoning • Deduction and induction	• Induction	• retroduction/abduction

Sources: (Sayer, 2000; 2010; Bhaskar, 1998; 2008; Fleetwood, 2013).

Appendix 2

2a. Induction, deduction and abduction

Abduction differs to the more commonly used induction and deduction. In inductive research, a universal rule is inferred by taking a group of cases and examining their implied results. Shank (1998, p.847) adapts Peirce's (1994) original example to illustrate induction:

> *Case – [We know that] These beans are from this bag.*
> *Result – [We have observed that] These beans are white.*
> *Rule – [Probably, then] All the beans from this bag are white.*

The purpose of inductive reasoning then is to evaluate a hypothesis by providing data that should conform to it (Timmermans and Tavory 2012). Deductive research on the other hand begins with a rule and either confirms or falsifies it by applying it to a case. As Shank (1998, p.847) illustrates:

> *Rule – [It is true that] All the beans from this bag are white.*
> *Case – [We know that] The beans are from this bag.*
> *Result – [Certainly, it is true that] These beans are white.*

The purpose of deduction is to provide a generalisation or establish a causal chain once a hypothesis has been formed (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012). Abduction, in contrast to these, aims to find explanations for observed facts, beginning with the result of something and drawing on evidence and existing knowledge in an attempt to explain it (Richardson and Kramer, 2006). The explanation of the event becomes the hypothesis or set of hypotheses which can be explored subsequently through inductive and deductive inquiry. Charles Peirce, who introduced abduction in the 1930s, argued that all ideas of science were arrived at through abduction (Richardson and Kramer, 2006). Again from Shank (1998, p.847):

> *Result – [We have the experience that] These beans are white [but this experience lacks any real meaning for us].*
> *Rule – [The claim that] All the beans from this bag are white [is meaningful in this setting].*
> *Case – [Therefore, it is both plausible and meaningful to hypothesise that] These beans are from this bag.*

For Peirce, hypothesis generation can only occur through abduction because induction and deduction are unsuitable for the job. Abduction, he held, was "the only logical operation which introduces any new ideas; for induction does nothing but determine a value, and deduction merely involves the necessary consequences of a pure hypothesis" (Peirce, 1934, cited in Timmermans and Tavory, 2012, p.171). Sayer (2000) provides some historical examples of scientific and lay-scientific hypotheses reached at through abduction which were later confirmed or denied when it became empirically possible: viruses and capillaries eventually confirmed, witchcraft and the idea of heat as a substance ultimately rejected.

Appendix 3

3a. Distribution of tomato processing industries in Tunisia.

Nabeul (14)

- SODACO Soliman
- SCAP / CB Grombalia
- EL FELLAH Takelsa
- ZGOLLI FRERES Korba
- ALICAP Korba
- SOMECO Korba
- ZGOLLI FILS Korba
- KHEMIRI FRERES Korba
- SOCCOBA Menzel Témime
- COMOCAP Haouaria
- SICAP kélibia
- SOCODAL kélibia
- STE ZINA kélibia
- BRIMA kélibia

KAIROUAN (2)

JOUDA
Kairouan
Carthage Food
Kairouan

Ben Arous (2)

Ets Majoul
Ezzahra

EL BARAKA
Ben arous

La Manouba (2)

Tucal
Manouba
SOTIA
Borj El Amri

BEJA (2)

SICAM
Medjez El Bab

Sonocat

Le KEF (1)

ABIDA
Dahmani

SIDI BOUZID (1)

STE ESSAYAH
Sidi Bouzid

Ariana (1)

STTPA

Source: GICA (2016).

Appendix 4

4a. Changes in the proportion of farmers according to their age (%).

Age of farmers	1961-1962 survey		1994-1995 survey		2004-2005 survey	
	Farmers	Land	Farmers	Land	Farmers	Land
<40 years of age	33	27	21	19	13	11
40-60 years of age	46	49	42	41	44	43
>60 years of age	21	24	37	40	43	46

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources (2006). Enquête sur les Structures des Exploitations Agricoles 2004-2005.

4b. Changes in farming systems in Tunisia (measured in % of cultivated land).

System	1961-1962	1994-1995	2004-2005
Owner-operated	81.5	91	94.8
Renting	7.5	2.5	2.2
Sharecropping and others	11	6.5	3
Total	100	100	100

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources (2006). Enquête sur les Structures des Exploitations Agricoles 2004-2005.

4c. Distribution of agri-food processors for tomatoes, chili peppers and potatoes.

Agri-food processors	Tunisia		Nabeul governorate		El-Haouaria-Dar Allouche	
	Units	%	Units	% Tunisia	Units	% Nabeul
Tomato	25	100	14	56	4	29%
Chili Pepper	25	100	14	56	4	29%
Potato	14	100	7	50	4	57%

Source: GIL (2014; 2015), GICA (2014) and author calculations. Tomatoes and chili peppers are processed by the same units.

Appendix 5

5a. Cutting of the crop

Chiheb: When we take the product to him, he cuts one part from that part. Only he can pay the workers [interpreter: he means that the workers are just following orders from above]. *When we take 20,000 kg or 15,000 kg, he cuts 4000 or 5000kg.*

Interviewer: Why?

Walid: It's just like this. He says that this contains soil and that it isn't good. And you can't find anyone to talk to him [...] He doesn't tell you he classified your product!

Chiheb: You don't see him.

Walid: And when you ask he finds [comes up with] *a reason.*

Interviewer: Does he come at the end to tell you about the spending, cost and the profit?

Walid: Not at the very moment you take the product. They give you an invoice on which is written how much he cuts. When you ask him why he tells you this it. In the bill you can find all details of the product, as if he is saying 'I am not stealing'. This is it.

Interviewer: When he does this, do you discuss this with him?

Walid: No, we don't discuss it.

Appendix 6

6a. Research participants

Code	Name	Date	Gender	Relation to land	Summary or transcript
100101	Monem	30-Sep 2015	M	L	T
100102	Sofien, Sana, Ali	01-Oct 2015	M,F,M	L	T
100103	Ahmed	11-Oct 2015	M	L	T
100104	Dali	11-Oct 2015	M	L	T
100105	Mariam	28-Oct 2015	F	ST	S
100106	Sahar	28-Oct 2015	F	L	S
100107	Sara, Emna, Motaz	29-Oct 2015	F,F,M	L	T
100108	Hamdi	10-Nov 2015	M	ST	T
100109	Mehdi	17-Nov 2015	M	ST	T
100201	Skander	11-Oct 2015	M	L	T
100202	Lotfi	11-Oct 2015	M	FR (FST)	T
100203	Khalil	09-Nov 2015	M	FR (FST)	T
100204	Salma	10-Nov 2015	F	ST	T
100205	Midou	10-Nov 2015	M	ST	S
100206	Youssef	11-Nov 2015	M	ST	T
100207	Feres	11-Nov 2015	M	ST	T
100208	Filipe	12-Nov 2015	M	ST	S
100209	Abdou	12-Nov 2015	M	ST	T
100210	Karim	17-Nov 2015	M	ST	T
100211	Akil	06-Jan 2016	M	ST	T
100301	Marwa	12-Oct 2015	F	ST	T
100302	Brahim	12-Oct 2015	M	L	T
100303	Walid, Chiheb	12-Oct 2015	M	L	T
100304	Amir, Raouf, Houda, Nassim	29-Oct 2015	M,M,F,M	ST	T
100305	Ramzi	18-Nov 2015	M	ST	T
100306	Houssem	18-Nov 2015	M	ST	T
100307	Baha	19-Nov 2015	M	L	T
100308	Wassel, Nawres	19-Nov 2015	M, F	ST	S
100309	Jamel, Rayen, Taha	20-Nov 2015	M,M,M	ST	T
100310	Rania	21-Dec 2015	F	ST	S
100311	Adel	02-Jan 2016	M	ST	T
100401	Noman	21-Oct 2015	M	L	T
100402	Victor, Mar	27-Oct 2015	M	L	S
100403	Atef	28-Oct 2015	M	L	T
100404	Chaabane, Hela	28-Oct 2015	M, F	L	T
100405	khaled	24-Dec 2015	M	ST	S
100601	Bilel	23-Dec 2015	M	ST	S
100501	Ghassen	21-Oct 2015	M	L	T
100502	Fedi	22-Oct 2015	M	L	T
100503	Helmi and Salma	22-Oct 2015	M,F	L	T
100504	Ayoub	03-Jan 2016	M	ST	S
100801	Cheima	10-Oct 2015	F	L	T

List of research participants. Relation to land indicates where research participants are landowners (L), share tenants (ST), or fixed renters (FR). Former share tenants are indicated where known (FST). Location is omitted.

6b. Key informant

Key informant 1	Salwa Kennou, President of AFTURD, Tunis, Tunisia. Agronomist.

Appendix 7

7a. Semi-structured interview questions

1. Introduction

Purpose: To understand past and present farming practices and problems, and explanations. Begin to understand how farmers respond to problems, past and present.

2. General Information

3. General priorities

Aim to understand what people articulate as livelihood needs, though open to possibility of other needs.

- What are the greatest challenges/problems/difficulties they face in agriculture?
- What action and change would they like to see?

4. Present farming practices

Aim to understand present farming practices.

4.1 How important is farming for supporting the family?

4.2 What are the farming activities that happen on the farm?

- What is produced? (vegetables, milk etc.)
- List here, and if prices set or not (prices fixed for cereals, milk, tomatoes)

4.3 How does it happen?

- Description of production cycles – from sowing to harvest.

4.4 What do you do on the farm?

- Do you or anyone in your family have any non-farming work?
- How do these support family farming?
- Why do they engage in this livelihood instead of farming?

4.5 Does everyone in the household work on the same farming activities or do people do different things?

- Understand household division of labour (gender, generation, labour hiring

4.6. Do you consume any of the products yourselves?

4.7. Do you exchange it for other items or services (e.g. do they give some potatoes to a friend and a friend lends them some tools or some help in the field)?

5. Buying and selling

5.1 What happens when different products are harvested?

- Ask about the different products and where they go (tomatoes, potatoes, milk etc.)

  o Does any of it go to the market?

    ▪ If it not sold on the market, why not?

    ▪ If yes, what are the benefits?

5.2. Are there any challenges associated with selling different products?

- What is your opinion of the prices received for your products, either from markets or from buyers?

- What happens?

- Some farmers mentioned that the prices suddenly get lower. Did you experience this? How did you respond?

- Are some of the creditors/seed providers better than others?

  - Have you tried to negotiate with them, for example to get better prices or to be more relaxed about debt repayment?

- What happens when people cannot repay the creditors?

- Are there any benefits to this credit system? If not, why do you continue to use it?

6. Historical Perspective

6.1. You have talked about a number of issues. Did these exist in the past? Were there different problems? For example, did you used to grow different plants or have different animals but decided to stop?

6.2 When did you start growing and selling these products in this way? Why did you decide to start growing and selling these products in this way?

6.3 In the past were there any especially difficult periods for the farm. Maybe there were specific incidents?

  IF YES

- What were they?

- What you were faced with these/this problem(s), what options did you have? Did you manage to overcome them? How? (new techniques for growing crops, help from the family, help from the government etc.)

- Try to identify the role of other stakeholders – state agencies, banks, members of the community.

- Did you learn anything from the experience?

6.4 What about here in <town name>? Have other people experienced negative change?

- What sort of change?

6.5 What about since the Revolution? Have there been any changes? Were things different before?

6.6 When other farmers are having difficulties with prices, credit, debt etc. what do they do to try to make things better?

Do family members help them?

Can they or family members get jobs elsewhere?

Can they use new animals or new plants?

- Try to elicit a number of each and explanations for their effectiveness.

- Are these new to you or based on innovated ideas?

- How do they help to overcome difficulties?

- How did they learn about these techniques, technologies or strategies? (ancestors, neighbours, friends, extension etc.)

- Do they need any support in implementing them e.g. financial, training etc., and from whom?

6.7 Have you heard of people deciding to quit farming and move away?

- How did you feel when they told you that?

- Have their livelihoods changed and improved?

7. Support

7.1 Are there any organisations or people in <town name> or nearby that provide support small farmers?

- What do you know about them?

7.2 What does the government do to help farmers?

- What about in the past?

- If things changed, why? How does that make you feel?

7.3 Have you ever told the government about these problems?

- What happened?

- What did they say?

7.4 Have other people tried to tell the government about their problems?

7.5. What should done to improve things for farmers?

7b. Information sheet

Study overview information sheet

- **What is the research about?**

This study is part of a larger research project that is being conducted in Tunisia which is looking at people's different needs and agendas for change. The larger project is looking at different communities in Tunisia, such as mining communities Gafsa and local communities in Tataouine that depend on natural resources. It is working with local Tunisian organisations and Tunisian researchers.

This particular study intends to look at farming communities in Cap Bon. The objective of the study is to understand, first what the agendas for change are of people who live and work in rural areas and with resources (for example land, water, work, crops etc.), and second about what people are doing to realise these agendas for change. As part of the larger research project, it is hoped that this study increases available information about people's needs, agendas and activities which can be used by in academic, policy and practice publications.

- **What am I being asked to do?**

You are being asked to take part in an interview. The interview will take about an hour and there will be some questions. The questions will ask for your views on agendas and needs and about what is being done to realise these agendas.

You do not have to take part in the study if you do not want to. You can withdraw from the study during the interview or afterwards as long as you withdraw prior to the publication of research findings. To withdraw you will need to tell me or a representative of AFTURD. During the interview and focus group discussion you can choose not to answer specific questions. You can stop the interview at any time, either because you need a break or because you wish to end the interview.

- **Anonymity**

Anonymity will be guaranteed for all research participants. Direct means of identification will be removed from interview transcripts (for example names, places of work), and indirect means will also be removed where possible (for example workplace). You can decide whether direct but anonymised quotes can appear in research outputs.

- **How will information from interviews and focus groups be used?**

The information can be used in completion of a doctoral thesis and in academic, policy and practice outputs and publications. Individuals may not benefit directly from the study but it is hoped that civil society groups will benefit from academic, policy and practice outputs.

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    +447474023895 (UK)

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7c. Informed consent form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

To be read to participants in Arabic and consent taken orally.

My name is Eric Hoddy and I am a student researcher in the Transformative Justice project, based at the University of York in the UK. I am conducting research on agendas for change of people who live and work in rural areas and what people are doing to realise these agendas.

Please answer 'yes' or 'no' to the following points:

I have been read the 'Study overview information sheet' and I understand it.

Yes ☐   **No** ☐

Any questions I have had about the project have been answered.

Yes ☐   **No** ☐

I understand what the study is about.

Yes ☐   **No** ☐

I understand that

Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary and I can stop at any time.

Yes ☐   **No** ☐

I can withdraw after the interviews as long as I withdraw prior to the publication of research findings.

Yes ☐   **No** ☐

I do not need to answer questions if I do not want to.

Yes ☐   **No** ☐

Anonymity will be guaranteed in research outputs (my name will not be used, and nor will other data that may identify me such as my workplace or specific events I attended).

Yes ☐   **No** ☐

The information I give will be used in research outputs, such as articles or reports.

Yes ☐   **No** ☐

I agree that

The research outputs can contain anonymous quotes from the interview.

Yes ☐   **No** ☐

The interview can be recorded so that the written record is accurate.

Yes ☐   **No** ☐

I am willing to participate in the study.

Yes ☐   **No** ☐

Appendix 8

8a. Unemployment men and women, 2010-2015 (national). * calculated for the third trimester. Source: INS, 2015.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015*
Women	18.9	28.2	24.2	21.9	21.1	22.5
Men	10.9	15.4	13.9	12.8	12.5	12.4

8b. Unemployment rate men and women in 2014 (governorates). Source: CREDIF, 2018.

Governorate	Female	Male
Tunis	17.7	11.1
Ariana	16.1	8.7
Ben Arous	18.1	10.2
Manouba	24.8	13.8
Nabeul	14.8	8.0
Zaghouan	20.9	14.8
Bizerte	20.6	11.9
Beja	29.0	13.7
Jendouba	38.7	20.8
El Kef	30.5	14.4
Siliana	23.0	13.8
Sousse	14.5	8.7
Monastir	12.6	7.4
Mahdia	17.2	10.1
Sfax	21.0	8.7
Kairouan	26.6	12.0
Kasserine	37.6	17.4
Sidi Bouzid	28.5	13.1
Gabes	36.3	12.2
Mednine	31.5	8.6
Tataouine	46.0	18.7
Gafsa	42.7	19.0
Tozeur	26.5	10.8
Kebili	40.2	13.8

Appendix 9

9a. Education of men and women in Tunisia, 2014. Source: CREDIF, 2018.

	Women (%)	Men (%)
Illiteracy	25	12
First stage of basic education	30	36
Second stage of basic education	32	39
Higher education	13	13

Appendix 10

10a. Poverty by governorate and region in 2015. Source: INS, 2016a.

Poverty rate by governorate		Poverty rate by region	
Governorate	**Poverty rate (%)**	**Region**	**Poverty rate (%)**
Tunis	3.5	Greater Tunis	5.3
Ariana	5.4		
Ben Arous	4.3		
La Manouba	12.1		
Nabeul	**7.4**	**Northeast**	**11.6**
Zaghouan	12.1		
Bizerte	17.5		
Béja	32.0	Northwest	28.4
Jendouba	22.4		
Le Kef	34.2		
Siliana	27.8		
Sousse	16.3	Centre east	11.5
Monastir	8.3		
Mahdia	21.1		
Kairouan	34.9	Centre west	30.8
Kasserine	32.8		
Sidi Bouzid	23.1		
Gabès	15.9	Southeast	18.6
Sfax	5.8		
Mednine	21.7		
Tataouine	15.0		
Gafsa	18.8	Southwest	17.6
Tozeur	14.7		
Kelebi	18.5		
National	15.2		

Appendix 11

11a. Governorate levels of development. Source: Ministry of Regional Development and Planning, 2012b.

Governorate	Indicator	Rank
Tunis	0.76	1
Ariana	0.69	2
Ben Arous	0.66	3
Monastir	0.64	4
Sousse	0.62	5
Nabeul	**0.57**	**6**
Sfax	0.56	7
Tataouine	0.55	8
Manouba	0.53	9
Gabes	0.53	10
Tozeur	0.51	11
Kelibi	0.50	12
Medenine	0.50	13
Bizerte	0.49	14
Mahdia	0.42	15
Gafsa	0.41	16
Le Kef	0.40	17
Beja	0.39	18
Zaghouan	0.39	19
Siliana	0.36	20
Jendouba	0.31	21
Sidi Bouzid	0.28	22
Kairouan	0.25	23
Kasserine	0.16	24

Appendix 12

12a. Some key socio-economic data from the General Census of the Population and Habitat (INS, 2016b). * The rate of unemployment is calculated for the population over the age of 15.

	Population	Illiteracy	Unempl-oyment*	Population engaged in agriculture and fish	Population engaged in commerce	Population engaged in industrial manufacturing	Access to household tap water	Households owning their own home	Net migration 2009-2014 (individuals)
Haouaria delegation	41,317	24.00	10.76	39.16	8.08	16.26	74.21	92.94	-724
Communal	9,508	19.87	15.15	13.74	9.97	12.32	99.20	88.63	-1014
Non-communal	31,809	25.26	9.66	45.11	7.63	17.19	66.45	94.27	290
Hammam El Rhezez delegation	15,727	16.94	8.22	29.78	8.47	19.74	87.06	86.10	632
Communal	13,634	15.26	8.62	23.92	9.47	21.09	92.38	88.31	662
Non-communal	2,093	27.34	5.92	62.39	4.70	12.27	52.08	71.59	-30
Nabeul governorate	787,987	15.61	9.95	15.87	11.90	26.33	88.93	78.35	13,502
Communal	535,970	11.63	10.39	9.06	13.46	25.86	96.62	73.95	8,351
Non-communal	251,948	24.18	9.04	29.63	8.75	27.27	71.63	88.26	5,151
Tunisia	10,982,476	19.3	14.82	10.47	13.15	18.29	89.27	77.23	-

The sectors around which livelihood activities are organised in both delegations are strongly oriented toward agriculture and fish, with industry and commerce taking second and third places. The proportion of the population engaged in the agriculture and fish sector is much higher than the governorate and the national average, while the proportion of people engaged in agriculture and fish in Haouaria is higher than in any of Nabeul's other delegations. The data distinguishes between the communal and non-communal (or urban and non-urban) areas in the delegations. As can be seen from this table, most of Nabeul's population is communal, but Haouaria is overwhelmingly non-communal while Hammam El Rhezez fits the regional pattern. The distinction has implications for levels of development: for instance, access to tap water in Haouaria outside communal areas is lower, at 66.45% to 99.2%, and the tendency is for literacy to be lower in non-communal areas.

Appendix 13

13a. Number of individual and collective protests per year, 2015-2017. Source: FTDES, 2018.

	2015	2016	2017
Individual protests	41	114	116
Collective protests	4375	8599	10366

13b. Protests according to sector, 2015-2017. Source: FTDES, 2018.

	2015	2016	2017
Economic	351	1013	1313
Social	701	1382	1760
Political	395	713	1032
Education	1786	1895	1102
Environment	149	426	305
Administrative	420	1575	2578
Religious	87	37	42
Sanitation/health	88	381	601
Security	259	982	1261
Sports	139	195	342
Total	**4375**	**8599**	**10336**

13c. Protests according to governorate, 2015-2017. Source: FTDES, 2018.

	2015		2016		2017	
	Individual protest	Mass protest	Individual protest	Mass protest	Individual protest	Mass protest
Bizerte	55	174	4	217	1	211
Tunis	29	487	11	733	18	619
Ariana	5	89	1	77	1	54
Manouba	10	92	3	174	4	156
Ben Arous	3	60	2	109	3	117
Zaghouan	3	38	2	68	2	115
Nabeul	37	138	4	225	6	176
Jendouba	43	188	6	439	2	402
Beja	10	68	2	287	0	224
Kef	13	125	2	263	1	311
Siliana	5	98	3	290	1	285
Sousse	26	195	4	426	10	448
Monastir	16	126	4	153	3	175
Mahdia	16	133	6	212	3	292
Sfax	22	282	5	488	10	557
Kairouan	91	433	21	887	16	1117
Kasserine	63	216	6	654	4	657

Sidi Bouzid	46	274	1	768	12	1045
Gabes	5	161	3	316	2	402
Mendenine	1	232	4	512	5	406
Tataouine	5	129	3	306	3	918
Gafsa	80	388	8	712	6	972
Tozeur	3	63	1	109	1	220
Kelibi	3	186	8	174	2	457
Total	**590**	**4375**	**114**	**8599**	**116**	**10336**

Glossary

AFTURD   Tunisian Research Association for Research in Development

BNA   National Agriculture Bank (BNA)

CR   Critical realism

FTDES   Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights

GATT   General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

GT   Grounded theory

IVD   Truth and Dignity Commission

MST   Landless Rural Workers' Movement

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