The social inequalities of development in Tunisia

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Abstract:

The aim of this article is, at first, to analyze the social inequalities of development in Tunisia, their evolution, their main characteristics and their political and economic factors.

In the first part, we will analyze the evolution of the poverty and the distribution of revenues and wealth in Tunisia. Moreover, the second part will focus on the factors of social inequalities of development, especially the impact of economic liberalization and the structural adjustment plan.

Keywords: Poverty; distribution of wealth; inequality; development; indicators of human poverty; structural adjustment plan.

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Introduction:

Although the socio-economic performance is undeniable and the improvement in human development indicators is unquestionable, these performances cannot hide the existence of an inequitable distribution of the fruits of growth due to flagrant regional inequalities (or unequal regional development) (Bousnina A., 2007) and also because of social inequalities (or unequal social development).

Like previous researches, where we have tried to show that development has favored certain areas to the detriment of others and that it has marginalized certain spaces to the benefit of others) (Bousnina A., 2012), our concern in this article will be to respond to the following question: Is development unequal at the social level (and not only at the regional level)? Has it marginalized certain social strata and is there really a divide between the different segments of the population?

To answer these questions, we will focus our interest on the analysis of two primordial aspects of development constituting the essence of the social dimension and whose study is very useful to show the existence of social inequalities. (or unequal social development), it is about poverty and the distribution of income,[1] the analysis of which could show us the existence of certain poor categories who have not benefited from an egalitarian distribution of resources reinforcing thus social "bipolarization".

I- Poverty and income distribution

1- The evolution of poverty

Poverty[2] has fallen substantially in Tunisia. In absolute terms, the number of poor fell from 1,533,000 in 1966 to 324,000 in 2015. The poverty rate, meanwhile, experienced an accelerated decline, falling from 33% to 3% during the same period.

Table 1- Poverty, percentage of population living on less than a dollar a day (PPP) (1985-2015)

Year	%
1985	15
1990	10.7
1995	11.8
2000	6.0
2005	3.4
2010	2.0
2015	0.2

Source: World Bank

This concerns extreme poverty. But for overall poverty, the rate is still high, it is 15.2% for Tunisia in general and 26%% in non-communal (or rural) areas; which means that nearly 1.6 million Tunisians are considered poor in 2015, according to official data from the National Institute of Statistics.

Table 2- Poverty rate by area

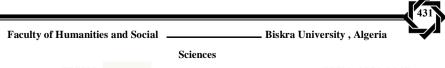| Year	2000	2005	2010	2015
Poverty rate (in %)	25.4	23.1	20.5	15.2
Urban	16.6	14.8	12.6	10.1
Rural	40.4	38.8	36.0	26.0

Source : NIS

2- The mapping of poverty

Despite the reduction in poverty, this improvement was not widespread. Indeed, the disparities in the level of expenditure are inherent in the inequalities in the standard of living between the different regions, which was at the origin of the concentration of poverty in certain areas.

Notwithstanding the significant decline in poverty throughout Tunisia (this rate fell from 33% in 1966 to 4.2% in 2000 and 3% in 2015), *disparities persist* despite all the efforts made in terms of regional development.

Already in 1966, the cleavage between the different zones was very pronounced because of the concentration of poverty in certain regions

and the highly differentiated geographical stratification of the population. According to H.Dimassi, "the pockets of great poverty", namely the most disadvantaged, are essentially made up of poor households (of this mass of seasonal and occasional agricultural workers) located mainly in the North West and South. On the other hand, the category of means (households of small bosses, self-employed, employees of the administration) and the wealthy category (bosses, techno-bureaucrats, senior executives) are concentrated in the North-East (including the District of Tunis) (Dimassi H., 1983, pp. 608-610).

In 2015, the mapping of the poverty incidence in the country indicates that there is a **high concentration of poverty in the Center-West and the North-West of Tunisia.** Although the incidence in the coastal regions of Grand Tunis and North-East and Center-East is very low, there are, however, some delegations with a relatively high incidence. The concentration of poor people is mainly observed in the non-coastal regions of central and northern Tunisia.

The three delegations with the highest poverty rates are: Hassi El Frid, Djedeliane and El Ayoun, all situated in central Tunisia. The delegations around Tunis, in particular El Menzah, La Goulette and Ariana Ville are among the least poor delegations in Tunisia (INS, 2020, p.9).

-*District of Tunis :* Grand Tunis includes four governorates which are Tunis, Ariana, Ben Arous and Manouba, and 48 delegations. They represent the most affluent region of Tunisia in which the average poverty rate at the delegation level is 6.1% and does not exceed 15.2%. The poorest delegations are Teborba (15.2%), El Battane (14.5%), and Kalaat El Andalous (12.5%). The El Menzah (0.2%), La Goulette (1.1%) and L'Ariana Ville (1.3%) delegations have the lowest poverty rates in the region.

-*North-East:* The Northeast region is made up of three governorates which are Nabeul, Zaghouan and Bizerte. Although the average

poverty rate is quite low (11.9%), there are still some pockets of poverty in certain rural areas of the governorate of Bizerte where the incidence of the highest poverty is observed in the delegation of *Sedjnane (39.9%), followed by Djoumine (36.6%) and Ghezala (34%).* Nabeul (4.7%), Dar Chaabane Fehri (4.9%) and Bizerte Nord (5.3%) have the lowest poverty rates in the region (Ibid, p.9.)

-North-West: The North West region is made up of four governorates which are Beja, Jendouba, Kef and Seliana. The poorest regions are located in the southwestern part and a few in the northern part of the region. **The poorest delegations are Neber (45.4%), El-Rouhia (40.7%) and Sakiet Sidi Youssef (39.7%)**. The delegations of Jendouba Sud (10.7%), Bou Salem (16.6%), Tabarka (16.7%) and Seliana Nord (16.8%) have the lowest poverty incidence in the region.
-Center-East: The Center-East is made up of four governorates, which are Sousse, Monastir, Mahdia and Sfax and 56 delegations. With an average poverty rate of 11.7%, the region is heterogeneous; the lowest poverty rate being 2.5% in Sfax Ville and the highest being 36.9% in Chorbane. In addition to the aforementioned delegations, the poorest delegations are Ouled Chamekh (35%) and Hebira (33.4%), while Sfax West (3.0%) and Sfax South (3.0%) are after Sfax Ville (2.5%) among those with the lowest poverty rates in the region.
-Center-West: The Center-West is made up of three governorates, which are Kairouan, Kasserine and Sidi Bouzid, and represents one of the poorest regions with an average rate of 29.3% and with little heterogeneity among the governorates. Poverty rates are never lower than the national level of 15.3%. **Hassi Ferid (53.5%), Djedeliane (53.1%) and El Ayoun (50.1%) are the poorest delegations**. Sidi Bouzid Ouest (17.4%), Kasserine Nord (18.9%) and Souk Jedid (20.8%) have the lowest poverty rates in the region (Ibid, p.10).

-*South-East:* The South-East region is made up of the governorates of Gabes, Medenine and Tataouine. With an average rate of 17.8%, these governorates are heterogeneous in terms of poverty, with richer pockets around urban areas and poorer pockets in rural areas (Bousnina A., 2019). The incidence of poverty is the highest in Beni Khedache (36.9%), followed by the delegations of Menzel El Habib (33.6%) and Sidi Makhlouf (33.4%) and but respectively low in Gabes Sud (9.4%) and Djerba Houmet Souk (9.5%).

-*South-West:* The South-West region has relatively poor pockets in its north-east part and richer delegations around the local urban areas. The average poverty rate is 18.2%. The Belkhir (31.2%), Sned (27.2%) and Douz Sud (25.9%) delegations are the poorest in the region. Tozeur (10.3%), Kebili North (12.3%) and Gafsa South (15.4%) have the lowest poverty rates ((Ibid, p.10).

Table 3: The poverty rate by region (2014/2015)

Region	2015(Budget Survey 2015)	2014 (GPHC 2014)
D.Tunis	5.3	6.1
NE	11.6	11.9
NW	**28.4**	**25.8**
CW	**30.8**	**29.3**
CE	11.4	11.7
SE	18.5	17.8
SW	17.5	18.2
Tunisia	15.2	15.3

Source: NIS: GPHC 2014 and NIS: Survey on the budget, consumption and standard of living of households 2015

3-Poverty indicators after the revolution

At the end of 2011, the INS undertook a complete review and update of its poverty measurement methodology in collaboration with the African Development Bank and the World Bank. The work was carried out in consultation with a committee of Tunisian university experts. According to this new study, a "poverty line" has been defined which designates the minimum level of consumption below which a person is considered to be poor, that is to say not having a

suitable standard of living. A separate poverty line was estimated for each of the three strata defined in the household survey: ''big cities'' (Tunis, Sfax, Sousse…), small and medium-sized towns, and rural areas. This threshold takes into account the consumption patterns of Tunisians and the cost of living in the different places of residence (INS, 2012, p.3).

Table 4: Evolution of the poverty line (in Dinars) by stratum between 2000 and 2010

place of residence	Poverty line			Extreme poverty line		
	2000	2005	2010	2000	2005	2010
''Big cities''	902	1038	1277	534	615	757
Common averages	818	941	1158	518	596	733
Not municipal	581	669	820	405	466	571

Source: NIS: First results of the 2010 Household Budget, Consumption and Standard of Living Survey

Calculating the percentage of the population with a level of consumption below the poverty line is one of the possible measures of poverty. This measure is called "poverty incidence". Based on the consumption aggregate and the new poverty line, the following table shows the incidence of poverty for 2015 and for the previous periods.

Table 5: Incidence of poverty by area and region between 2000 and 2015 (in %)

place of residence	Poverty			
	2000	2005	2010	2015
Tunisia				
Tunisia	32.4	23.3	15.5	15.2
Residence				
''Big cities''	21.5	15.4	9.0	6.3
Common averages	32.5	22.1	14.0	15.0

Not municipal	40.4	31.5	22.6	26.0
Region				
D. Tunis	21.0	14.6	9.1	**5.3**
NE	32.1	21.6	10.9	11.6
NW	35.3	26.9	25.7	**28.4**
CE	21.4	12.6	8.0	11.4
CW	49.3	46.4	32.3	**30.8**
SE	44.3	29.0	17.9	18.5
SW	47.8	33.2	21.5	17.5

Source: NIS: Survey on the budget, consumption and standard of living of households 2015

Although the method followed here does not calculate a "national poverty line" per se, but rather a poverty line specific to each stratum, the estimates of the incidence of poverty in each of the three strata can be aggregated (using an appropriate weighting system) to obtain (both for the extreme poverty line and the poverty line) the incidence of poverty at the national level. The poverty rate was 15.2% in 2015 against an incidence of poverty of 23.3% in 2005 and 32.4% in 2000[3]. This significant drop in poverty can be explained by the strong growth in consumption between 2000 and 2015. Indeed, consumption increased more rapidly than prices during this period, which then led to a significant drop in the proportion of Tunisians living below the poverty line. This is also true if we consider the extreme poverty indicator, which fell from 12% in 2000 to 3% in 2010.

Despite this significant reduction in poverty at the national level, the non-communal areas of Tunisia continue to have poverty rates almost twice as high as those in communal areas. If we use the extreme poverty line, the gap between municipal areas and large cities has even deteriorated. While the extreme poverty rate in the communal areas was four times higher than in the big cities in 2000 and it became seven times higher in 2010. The central western and north western regions of the country remain the poorest, followed by those to the south. The evolution of poverty rates between 2000 and 2010 varies significantly by region. As all survey-based estimates contain some margin of error, it is necessary to account for this error

in comparisons over time and between regions. With a reasonable margin of statistical precision, it can therefore be concluded that the poverty rate has fallen in all regions except the northwest, where the fall is not statistically significant. However, regional disparities in terms of poverty rates have not diminished. The Center West is still the poorest region of Tunisia and its delay compared to the coastal regions of Tunisia has even worsened. For example, its extreme poverty rate was six times higher than that of District of Tunis in 2000 and it became thirteen times higher in 2010 (Ibid, p.4).

On the other hand, several approaches have the advantage of offering more synthetic and global tools for analyzing poverty from a multidimensional perspective.

4- Multidimensional approaches to poverty

- The MSA approach: While the concept adopted by the NIS is that of financial poverty (and the poverty line is therefore based on household expenditure surveys), the Ministry of Social Affairs used, in May 2011, another multidimensional approach based on the lists of families in need (185,000 families after January 14), as well as the number of people holding free and reduced-price healthcare cards, whose income is below the SMIG (minimum wage). The count also took into account the beneficiaries of pensions below the SMIG, paid by the social security funds. This methodology showed the importance of poverty in Tunisia, with a rate of 24.7% and a workforce of 2.6 million poor people, with very high rates in several regions (42.3% in Sidi Bouzid, 46.4% in Kasserine, 42.0% in Kef and more than 50% in Siliana).

Table 6: Poverty rate in Tunisia by governorate (in 2011 and 2015)

Governorate	Poverty rate in % (MSA 2011)	Poverty rate in % (NIS 2015)
Tunis	13.4	3.5
Ariana	10.1	5.4
B. Arous	12.8	4.3
Manouba	11.0	12.1
Nabeul	17.8	7.4

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Bizerte	23.8	17.5
Zaghouan	31.0	12.1
Beja	**35.6**	**32.0**
Jendouba	**41.0**	**22.4**
Le Kef	**42.0**	**34.2**
Siliana	**50.1**	**27.7**
Kairouan	**34.0**	**34.9**
Kasserine	**46.4**	**32.8**
Sidi Bouzid	**42.3**	**23.1**
Sousse	14.9	16.2
Monastir	15.8	8.3
Mahdia	29.8	21.1
Sfax	17.8	5.8
Gafsa	30.9	18.0
Tozeur	38.7	14.6
Kébili	32.8	18.5
Gabes	28.9	15.8
Medenine	24.5	21.6
Tataouine	38.3	15.0
Tunisia	24.7	15.2

Source: MSA (Ministry of Social Affairs May 2011) and NIS (2015)

- the relative poverty approach: this concept "introduces a dimension of variability over time and in relation to the field or sector concerned by the measurement of poverty […]. Several approaches have been developed for the measurement of relative poverty. The most common method for determining a relative poverty line is to set it at a given proportion of the arithmetic mean or median of the distribution of consumption or income. The relative poverty line is often set at the equivalent of 50% of the national median or average" (PNUD, 2004, pp.18-19).

According to this approach, where relative poverty is a very good indicator of social inequality, the poverty rate in Tunisia, is not equal to 3% but it is much higher than this figure: with a threshold of 50% of the median, the rate would be higher than 15.6% and with a threshold of 60%, this rate would be higher than 22.2%

- the vulnerability threshold approach: if the old NIS method starts from two distinct populations (municipal and non-municipal population), this new approach consists of calculating a poverty threshold (consisting of two components: food and non-food), starting

from the same reference population in both media. This method makes it possible to calculate two poverty thresholds: high threshold (threshold of vulnerability) and a low threshold (extreme poverty). According to this approach, the rate of poverty (or more precisely of vulnerability) was 11.4% in 2005 (in the Center West, this rate is higher than 29%) (Jmal Y., 2011).

- the approach to human poverty: it is the World Report on Human Development that introduced the notion of human poverty. He argued that while well-being cannot be reduced to income, poverty cannot be reduced to insufficient income. It is the deprivation of the most essential capacities of life, including that of leading a long healthy life, of accessing knowledge, of being sufficiently supplied with economic goods. As an alternative to measuring human poverty, the UNDP created the HPI (Human Poverty Index). It captures three aspects: deficits in the field of health (measured by the percentage of the population at risk of dying before the age of 40), deficits in the field of knowledge (measured by the percentage of illiterate adults) and deficits in in terms of what the economy provides through private income and national income, as measured by the percentage of the population without access to health services, the percentage of the population without access to drinking water and the proportion of children (under 5) who are underweight (PNUD, 2000, p.22).

Based on this approach, we have shown the significant decline in human poverty in Tunisia thanks to the significant drop in the HPI (integrating the IMR - the infant mortality rate - the percentage of the population without access to drinking water and illiteracy) increased from 0.655 to 0.175 between 1966 and 2010. However, by calculating an HPI for each region and for each governorate, we showed the concentration of human poverty in the governorates of the Center West and the North West contrary to the coastal regions (it is only these coastal governorates which have reached or are close to the

national threshold and which have recorded an HPI lower (or very close) to the national HPI, unlike the other regions -such as Kasserine or Jendouba- where human poverty affects more than a third of the population (this is why the gap between the extreme regions is still considerable, approaching in 2004: 220 points between the District of Tunis and Kasserine) (Bousnina A., 2007, pp.85-88). Using the 2010 data, we note that the gap is still significant, with a national HPI of 0.175 but an HPI in Gafsa and Kasserine of 0.280 and 0.278 respectively against 0.099 in Monastir

- the non-monetary approach: this approach can include the first but it integrates more variables and it often tries to construct well-being indices based on non-monetary attributes and especially on indicators of household living conditions. Based on this approach, some researchers have constructed an ICBE (composite index of well-being)[4] and have shown that despite the significant decline in poverty in Tunisia, regional disparities and between residential areas have remained fairly constant, poverty has always remained a rural phenomenon (more than 70% of the poor belong to rural areas) and the poorest regions of the country (in this case the North West and the Center West) are always the poorest regions. Thus, the differential in poverty levels is still high, which raises new questions about the effectiveness of the efforts made to combat this scourge. In addition, improving health conditions and the level of education are untapped options that can have quite significant marginal effects in reducing poverty (Ayadi M. et al., 2006, pp.42-43).

Similarly, referring to the non-monetary approach, UN studies using a Human Deprivation Indicator show the same disparities in quality of life and the same concentration of "non-monetary poverty" (for example, the governorate of Tunis with only an HDI (Deprivation) of 15% in 1984 is clearly in the lead, the governorate of Sidi Bouzid with a rate of 56% (i.e. a difference of nearly 41 points) comes in last position with marked delays in relation to the national

average. In 1994, Tunis still kept the first rank and Sidi Bouzid the last rank. In 1984 as well as in 1994, the District of Tunis, Monastir and Sousse were in the leaders while the interior regions of Kasserine, Sidi Bouzid, Kairouan, Jendouba and Siliana remain at the bottom of the ranking (ONU, 2001, p.69)[5]. Even if another indicator is calculated in 2000, then in 2004 and in 2011, the regional concentration remains almost the same.

In other studies, we find other "well-being indices" such as the one calculated by CREDIF (Center for Research, Documentation and Information on Women) and whose primary component was approximated by a simple arithmetic average of the proportions of households with television, a refrigerator, telephone, electricity, connection to the sanitation network and the drinking water network.

-The multidimensional poverty index (MPI): the interest of the MPI lies more particularly in the connection it establishes with the indicators used in the calculation of the HDI (health, education, living conditions). A person is "multidimensionally" poor if the weighted indicators in which he suffers shortages amount to at least 30% (Touhami H., 2012, p. 9).

[1]Another research must be mentioned on this subject, it is the work of Selma Zouari-Bouattour, *Capital humain et salaires. Le cas de la Tunisie,* Imprimerie officielle. Tunis 1986, where the author tries to show, among other things, the explanatory factors of wages, their explanation by the profitability of human capital, the disparities in wages between branches, the differences between environments and regions, the gender factor, the influence social origins on wage formation… (The statistical data used are those of the 1975 census and especially the 1977 Employment Survey).

[2]According to the INS, the poverty line, the minimum income below which a person cannot meet their most basic needs, in terms of food and non-food products, is determined from the estimate of the annual

expenditure, monetary and non-monetary, drawn from the results of national surveys on the budget, consumption and standard of living of households and on which the population is distributed by level of expenditure; more precisely, we refer in Tunisia, to characterize the poverty line, to the population located around the 20th percentile of the distribution of households by level of expenditure, to the structure of its expenditure and its food habits, Cf, Mongi Layeb, *«Disparités sociales et programmes de lutte contre la pauvreté »* in, J. Vallin J. et T. Locoh, 2001, pp 496-497

[3] Despite this decline, the number of poor people remains, in 2015, still high (compared to the small size of a country like Tunisia), since this number is still equal to more than 1600 thousand people (for extreme poverty, this number exceeds 324 thousand).

[4] In calculating this ICBE (index of well-being), the authors retained 11 attributes which can be classified according to 3 headings: possession of durable goods (possession of: radio, TV, refrigerator and telephone), housing conditions (access to drinking water, the existence of toilets, the type of housing - decent or not -, the quality of the ground and the number of people per room) and education (literacy of the wife).

[5] It should be noted that the IMH is based on the inclusion of the following variables: general mortality - literacy - drinking water supply - sanitation service and unemployment.

The IPM modifies the classification of countries by the HDI alone. Some countries regress like Ethiopia, India or Pakistan, others advance in the ranking like Tunisia (compared to other countries, the results of Tunisia, at the level of multidimensional poverty with -its different components- are relatively satisfactory).

5- Income distribution

The study of income distribution shows the real impoverishment of certain social categories which have not benefited from an equal distribution of growth and wealth[5].

Indeed, if we refer to the various indicators for the period 1975-2005 (for example), we can make the following remarks:

- the average per capita income (or GDP/capita) has been multiplied by nearly 18 (from 216 D to nearly 3750 D)

- the SMIG (40-hour diet) has been multiplied by nearly 8.6 (going from 22.5 D to 195 D)

- the SMIG (48-hour diet) has been multiplied by nearly 8.3 (from 27 D to 222.4 D)

-the daily SMAG has been multiplied by nearly 8.6 (going from 0.800 D to 6.909 D).

Even if we refer to a shorter period, namely the period 1990-2005, we notice the same trend with a much more accelerated growth of the average income per capita which was multiplied by 2.7 (from 1368 to 3735 D) while the SMIG and the SMAG were multiplied by 1.8 (the hourly SMIG -48h- went from 0.615 to 1.102 and the daily SMAG went from 3.661 to 6.909). This gap - very significant throughout the period 1974-2005 (18 against 8) - shows very clearly that it is high level incomes that have increased the most. This impoverishment of the working class can be confirmed by other indicators, in particular the distribution of poverty according to the socio-professional category of the household breadwinner.

NIS statistics show that the category most affected by poverty - besides the unemployed obviously - is that of manual workers with the highest rates among agricultural workers (10.6%) and non-agricultural workers (5.4%). Moreover, more than 74% of the poor population comes from households whose mainstay is an unemployed person, a farmer or a worker (this category of worker alone accounts for more than 50% of the poor population).

On the other hand, these social disparities and these inequalities of distribution can be supplemented by the study of the degree of concentration of expenditure and income between the different social categories. In this respect, the results of the 2000 Consumption Survey (for example) allow us to make the following remarks (INS, 2004 and PNUD, 2005):

- the wealthiest half of the population holds 77% of the mass of expenditure while the other half, the less wealthy, holds only 23%
- half of the mass of expenditure is carried out by 22% of the richest population while the rest of the population, i.e. 78%, has the other half of the mass of expenditure
- the richest 20% of the population hold more than 47% of total consumption, while the poorest 20% represent only 6% of total consumption, i.e. approximately 8 times less than the first
- the average expenditure of the richest 10% is more than 6 times that of the poorest 10%
- the richest 10% of the population hold more than 31.5% of the mass of expenditure, while the most disadvantaged 10% of the population hold only 2.3%, i.e. approximately 14 times less than the former.

In addition, the NIS publication on the results of the 2010 consumption survey (in September 2012) added another indicator, namely the polarization of income, which designates the degree of distribution of a population into several distant groups. People from different groups (different regions, for example) have very different lifestyles. However, people within each group (region, for example) show a strong sense of identification because they share almost the same standard of living. It should be noted that polarization can increase even in the absence of an increase in overall inequality.

The following table shows an increase in inequalities between regions. "This indicates that the feeling of alienation increases when the dispersion of the average standard of living between the regions increases (the average standard of living of the poorest regions

increases at a slower rate than that of the most affluent regions this which aggravates regional disparities). Furthermore, the reduction in intra-regional inequalities, from 21.1% in 2000 to 17.6 in 2010, indicates that the standard of living of residents of the same region (especially those in the North East, Center West and South, East and West) converges. Residents of the same region therefore display an increasingly strong sense of identification. The ratio between the inter-region inequality index and the intra-region inequality index therefore constitutes an appropriate polarization index" (INS, 2012, p 5).

On the other hand, some indicators can be useful for the study of inequalities. We can mention in particular the HDI adjusted for inequalities. This IDHI adjusts the Human Development Index (HDI) taking into account inequalities in the distribution of each dimension within the population. It is based on a class of distribution-sensitive composite indicators proposed by Foster, López-Calva and Székely, which draws on Atkinson's family of inequality measures. It is calculated as a geometric mean, based on the total population, considering each dimension separately. The HDI reflects the inequalities that exist in the dimensions of the HDI by "reducing" the average value of each dimension according to the level of inequality it presents. Thus, the HDI is in theory equal to the HDI if there is no inequality between individuals, but it decreases to move away from the HDI as inequalities increase. In other words, the adjusted index represents the actual level of human development (taking into account inequalities), while the HDI can be considered as an index of "potential" human development that could be achieved in the future. absence of any inequality. The difference between the two indicators, expressed as a percentage, indicates the "loss" in potential human development due to inequality (PNUD, 2011, p.187).

In the absence of inequalities, the HDI and the HDI are obviously equal. But the lower the HDI, the greater its difference with

the HDI and the greater the inequalities. Considering that the average inequality-adjusted HDI deficit is around 23% and that Tunisia's HDI in 2011 is 0.698, while its inequality-adjusted HDI is only 0.523, we can conclude that the Tunisian deficit expresses the extent of socio-economic inequalities in the country. However, a very strong connection exists between the accentuation of the overall losses in each index and the distribution of income as expressed by the GINI index. Indeed, the most "egalitarian" countries ultimately show lesser losses. This is the case of Hungary and Cuba in particular. But the downgrading of Tunisia actually comes from the conjunction of three losses: loss due to inequality of schooling (38.7%), loss due to income inequality (21.8%) and loss due to inequality in life expectancy (12.6%) (Touhami H., 2012, p.11).

Social inequalities can be summarized by the Gini index[5]. The evolution of the latter shows that the Gini coefficient has remained around 0.4 and the expenditure shares of each of the two poorest deciles have only increased marginally.

Thus, and despite the decline in absolute poverty, this "is not synonymous with a decline in inequality. Poverty can be significantly reduced in a context where different population groups see their situation worsening. For nearly two decades, Tunisia has achieved exceptional economic growth […]. While this growth has made it possible to significantly reduce the incidence of poverty, *it has not necessarily reduced the inequalities of distribution in the same proportions*. A better sharing of the fruits of growth and a greater balance in the distribution of income between social categories and between regions must henceforth constitute fundamental concerns of the public authorities" (PNUD, 2004, p.89).

II- Explanations and factors of social inequalities

The stabilization of social inequalities and the unequal distribution of income is mainly explained by political and economic factors.

These factors are primarily linked to the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Plan (the SAP). In fact, this plan renewed the recommendations of the IMF (International Monetary Fund), which linked the deterioration of the economic situation to three essential factors, namely the excessive growth of internal demand, the decline in exports and the excessive intervention of the State. Among the main means recommended by the SAP, we can cite in particular the stimulation of exports and the substitution of internal demand by external demand. It is, in fact, *the compression of domestic demand* which passes through that of consumption (linked to the compression of compensation costs and the pressure exerted on wages), by the improvement of the management of companies and the limitation of public expenditure (due to the reduction in recruitment and the "freezing" of salaries, the reduction in subsidies to public enterprises and the pressure on State investment) and by the promotion of exports (thanks to the devaluation of the currency and the compression of production costs through a restrictive wage policy and an improvement in productivity) (Ben Amor R., 1995, p.269).

These different measures show the social impact of SAP: according to some economists, "SAP is, in essence, anti-social, insofar as any positive result of SAP can only be obtained at the expense of the social. Thereby:

 - financial consolidation can only be achieved by controlling and freezing the wage bill

 - inflation can only be curbed by opting for strict control of the money supply and the credits distributed

 - stabilization must necessarily go through significant cuts in investment and social spending

 - the fall in real wages discourages effort, stimulates parallel work and often causes serious difficulties for sectors based on wage demand" (Mokadem M., 1996, pp.152-153).

Among the expected negative effects of the application of the SAP, we can mention in particular the reduction in the purchasing power of employees because, on the one hand, the State is supposed to recruit less or even lay off staff and, on the other hand, the decline of investment would result in weak job creation, hence the increase in the unemployment rate as well as the control of the operating budget, which results in pressure on wages and a drop in spending on social transfers. In short, we should witness a precariousness affecting all employees and the working classes in particular, resulting in the widening of spaces of exclusion (Ibid, p.270).

On the other hand, these various measures are combined with a disengagement of the State by giving to the private sector the public companies in difficulty and by entrusting to the market the role of main regulator, which reflects the permanent quest of the neoliberal approach of discredit state interventionism and concretize *the preponderance of "market" management of the economy.*

At the social level, this "market" management of the economy has generated a metamorphosis of social policy: if the interventionist model of social policy had as its central objective the achievement of collective well-being and the equalization of opportunities (its main instrument was public investment in "human stock" or in human capital) in order to ensure everyone the possibility of social mobility and the satisfaction of basic needs, the liberal model aimed to control inequalities (induced by the free functioning of the market) and was deployed upstream of the market, with a view to contributing to social advancement and the achievement of individual well-being and downstream of it to deal with the social exclusion engendered by the liberalization of market forces. With structural adjustment and state disengagement, neoliberal social policy shifted its center of gravity towards targeting the needs of the most disadvantaged social groups hard hit by the new economic policy (Guelmani A., 1996).

Thus, we speak more and more of the targeting of social programs because they are "specific programs of public assistance to fragile social categories which take on a certain importance with economic liberalization. This, by establishing, even gradually, truth in prices and more flexibility in factor markets, tends to reduce the indirect transfers from markets that benefit low-income populations through the subsidization of basic consumer goods and collective services" (Bouzaiane L. et Bachta M..S., 1995, p.101).

However, this targeting, a priori "social", took on new forms, particularly from the 1990s: according to M. Ben Romdhane, the fundamental source of power that remains in the party is that of *the instrumentalization of social policy: "the development of clientelism.* Distributing "favors", transforming some of the citizens into "customers", into "obligated" are the preferred means of receiving, in exchange, recognition and exercising a function and powers. For this, he must be able to permanently have resources, a stock of favors to distribute; for this, social policy, or at least one of its most significant components, must lose its anonymous, indiscriminate character and become personalized, individualized, targeted […]. *Clientelism becomes a system"* (Ben Romdhane M., 2011, pp. 259-261).

On the other hand, the growth of the highest incomes and the relative impoverishment of employees and workers confirms the relationship between liberalization and social inequalities, and this all the more so since in this dichotomous conception between the economic and the social (constituting the foundation of the SAP), the economic is understood from a micro-economic point of view which only observes the immediate profitability and the macro-economic financial balances, and one attributes in this logic to a group (employers: State and private owners of the means of production), the exclusive role of organizing the production of wealth, while the second group (workers and direct producers) is only associated in the

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negotiation operation, and it only appears as an actor than at the level of the distribution whose field is limited by an economic suffered (Bedoui A., 1993, p 244).

Moreover, the importance of social inequalities and distribution in Tunisia can be confirmed by a comparison of income distribution in the world. Without referring to countries achieving very high equality in distribution (and having a Gini index of 0.25, such as Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Japan), and if we talk about countries with a level of human development close to our country (that is to say countries with an HDI of between 0.5 and 0.8, what the UNDP calls countries with medium human development) and in particular countries for which data are available[5], we note that Tunisia appears to be the least egalitarian Arab country in terms of income distribution (the same is true if we compare Tunisia with other Asian countries such as Indonesia, Uzbekistan or Vietnam). On the other hand, Tunisia has a much lower Gini index than other countries at the same level of development and thus appears more egalitarian in terms of distribution compared to certain Asian countries (such as China, Thailand and Malaysia) and especially in relation to the countries of Latin America.

In addition to the Gini index (which is the highest for Tunisia), the Arab countries display more balanced distribution indicators than our country, both for the share of consumption or income held by the 20% or the 10% richer than that held by the poorest or the ratio of one of the two categories compared to the other.

In summary, the fruits of growth are unequally distributed between social strata (and obviously between spaces). Examination of expenditure and income distribution shows a process of divergence between backgrounds, regions, socio-professional categories and branches. Evolution has benefited the unproductive, the cities (and the coastline). The most disadvantaged are the countryside (and the

interior) and especially employees in the private sector and workers (Belhedi A., 1992, p 197).

In fact, poverty and income distribution are closely linked to many factors:

- the environment: the results of the last survey of 2015 show the importance of poverty and its increase in rural areas, with a rate clearly higher than the national average (in 2015 : national rate : 15.2%, the rate in "big cities": 6.3%, and the rural rate: 26%). Moreover, the majority of the poor population is concentrated in rural areas against less than 30% residing in communal areas. This territorial distribution of the poor was almost equal in 1967 (51% in urban areas) and it favored the cities since the proportion of the poor residing in rural areas exceeded 52% in 1980, which reflects the relative deterioration of the situation of the rural population

- the region of residence: notwithstanding the case of the North-West, the break in terms of income and poverty between the coast and the interior regions seems clear. This can be apprehended via two concordant data: the poverty rate, the average consumption expenditure per person and per year. In 2015, for example, only three regions had a poverty rate below the national average: District of Tunis, Center East and North East. Conversely, the southern and western regions of the country have a poverty rate higher than the national average, a finding corroborated by the level of consumption by region (the rate of poverty in 2015: 3.5% in Tunis and 8% in Monastir; 35% in Kasserine, 34% in Kef, 33% in Sidi Bouzid and more than 53% in some delegations of Kasserine: Hassi Frid 53.5% and Djedliane 53.1%).

-heredity: The income and the CSP (socio-professional category) of the parents control the access of the children to the best schools. The social origin of the pupils of the Pilot High Schools and of the

students in the most sought-after fields of higher education illustrates this dependence (INS, 2020).

-The relationship between poverty and some socio-economic variables[5]

*Poverty and urbanization: Tunisia is increasingly urbanizing through internal migration. The literature dealing with the link between poverty and urbanization is controversial. Some studies indicate that migration to large cities generates new problems related to poverty such as the proliferation of suburban areas of large cities. Others see it as a means of reducing poverty as savings go gradually from agriculture to other higher-paying sectors. In the case of Tunisia, the poverty is a predominantly rural phenomenon. Indeed, there is an opposite trend between the rate of poverty and rate of urbanization (INS, 2020, p.23).

*Poverty and unemployment rate: The links between unemployment and poverty are complex. It is obvious that unemployed workers are much more often exposed to the risk of poverty than working people. However, it is important to include monetary resources of the spouse and/or social transfers in the analysis of poverty, which attenuate insufficient individual earned income. Unemployment is one of the factors aggravating poverty. The simple correlation between the unemployment rate and the poverty rate by delegation is positive.

*Poverty and basic infrastructure: Several studies indicate that in general, the fight against poverty requires a sufficient and adequate supply of basic infrastructure. Through empirical analyses carried out in several developing countries, it appears that poverty is a decreasing function of accessibility to basic infrastructure. Tunisian data show that the delegations with the weakest connections to basic services (water drinking, sanitation, gas, electricity) are the poorest. Statistical data indicate that the North-West, Center-West and South delegations,
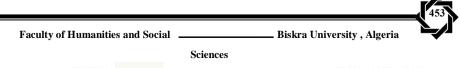
already characterized by high poverty rates, are the least endowed with these services (Ibid, pp. 27-28).

*Profile of poverty according to education variables: Among the multidimensional aspects of poverty, an important component is that of access to education. Studies indicate that the poorest families are also those with the least educated children or those who drop out of school at the primary level. The family problems related to poverty have effects on children that affect education. The children may be hungry, tired from walking a long distance to school and are sometimes affected psychologically by the material difficulties of their family. These factors make these children more vulnerable and more likely to develop difficulties at school and even to give up frequent. Thus, there is a two-way causal relationship between poverty and school dropout. The child who evolves in a disadvantaged family environment starts with a handicap for his academic success. He's more likely to experience problems of absenteeism and dropping out which generate, in addition to his school failure, significant difficulties of socio-professional integration and low wages, which perpetuates poverty. This poverty-dropout trap is costly for society. The statistical data underline the existence of a positive relationship between poverty and the rate of illiteracy in Tunisia. Similarly, statistics demonstrate the positive link between poverty and enrollment in higher education. The more the population is educated, the less it is affected by the phenomenon of poverty. The graphs also illustrate the positive relationships between the poverty rate and the level of education. It is clear that the poverty rate decreases with higher and higher levels of education (none, primary, secondary and higher) (Ibid, pp. 31-34).

According to some authors, the evolution of poverty and social inequalities is mainly explained by "the practices of social dumping

resulting from a policy of competitive disinflation which was accompanied by:

   - a revision of the frequency of salary adjustments (since 1990, the frequency is 3 years instead of one year before the application of the SAP. Since the signature of the partnership agreement (with the EU) , this new frequency led to a deterioration in the purchasing power of employees)

   - a reform of labor codes intended to make employment and wages more flexible. This amounts to providing more facilities for employers in terms of hiring (fixed-term contract, extension of the training period, etc.) of use of the labor force (working time, classification, organization of work, rotation increased, increased internal flexibility, etc.) and dismissal (more facility for the termination of employment contracts and fewer penalties, thus reducing the cost of dismissal)

   - the fall in the inflation rate was itself recorded by a consumer price index which is no longer representative of changes in the content of the consumer basket and consumer practices. So that the evolution of this price index can only lead to an underestimation of the real deterioration in the purchasing power of employees.

   - a decline in health expenditure, educational expenditure and social protection following the trend of State withdrawal observed in non-market services. Since the application of the SAP, this trend has resulted in an increase in the share of household expenditure in total health expenditure

   - a shrinking of the non-market sphere resulting from the withdrawal of the State and the expansion of market relations (privatization, liberalization, reduction of compensation, etc.)

   - a trend towards the commodification of the conditions of reproduction of the population and particularly of employees who represent approximately 65% of the employed working population. This means that in order to reproduce, the population is more and more led to go through the market and to bear an increasing share of

the expenses necessary for its reproduction (health, education, training, etc.) (Bedoui A., 2005, pp.9-10).

Conclusion:

The analysis of income distribution in Tunisia shows that the dividends of growth have been unequally distributed between the different social classes. In reality, the Tunisian developmental experience has - since independence - marginalized certain social strata and created a real divide between the different sections of the population.

Firstly, if monetary poverty (or absolute poverty) has fallen significantly, the use of other approaches shows that relative poverty (or even non-monetary poverty or vulnerability or multidimensional poverty) is still high, especially if we use the MSA approach (based in particular on social services) which shows that poverty affects almost a quarter of the population at the national level and almost half in most interior regions.

Secondly, the analysis of income distribution has shown the real marginalization of certain social categories which have not benefited from an equal distribution of growth and wealth. Indeed, the category most affected by poverty - besides the unemployed obviously - is that of workers with the highest rates among agricultural workers and non-agricultural workers. In addition, social inequalities can be attested to by the extent of the concentration of income and expenditure in the hands of a small segment of the richest population whose income has grown very rapidly, unlike the most disadvantaged.

Thirdly, our analysis of the different factors of social inequalities shows the impact of liberalization and the dichotomy between the economic and the social. In fact, these inequalities are explained, in particular, by economic liberalization, by the "social

disengagement" of the State, by the reduction of public expenditure and by the "market management" of the economy.

Subsequently, the entire Tunisian developmental model needs to be reviewed (Alaya H., 2018) : depraved, iniquitous, rendered obsolete by its inability to generate job-creating growth and, henceforth deprived of the state framework which controls more than two-thirds of economic activity and kept society under close surveillance, the Tunisian model needs to be rethought and rebuilt on entirely new foundations
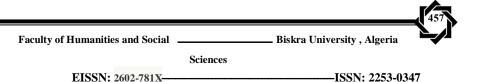
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Notes

1. Another research must be mentioned on this subject, it is the work of Selma Zouari-Bouattour, *Capital humain et salaires. Le cas de la Tunisie,* Imprimerie officielle. Tunis 1986, where the author tries to show, among other things, the explanatory factors of wages, their explanation by the profitability of human capital, the disparities in wages between branches, the differences between environments and regions, the gender factor, the influence social origins on wage formation… (The statistical data used are those of the 1975 census and especially the 1977 Employment Survey).

2. According to the INS, the poverty line, the minimum income below which a person cannot meet their most basic needs, in terms of food and non-food products, is determined from the estimate of the annual expenditure, monetary and non-

monetary, drawn from the results of national surveys on the budget, consumption and standard of living of households and on which the population is distributed by level of expenditure; more precisely, we refer in Tunisia, to characterize the poverty line, to the population located around the 20th percentile of the distribution of households by level of expenditure, to the structure of its expenditure and its food habits, Cf, Mongi Layeb, *«Disparités sociales et programmes de lutte contre la pauvreté »* in, J. Vallin J. et T. Locoh, 2001, pp 496-497

3. Despite this decline, the number of poor people remains, in 2015, still high (compared to the small size of a country like Tunisia), since this number is still equal to more than 1600 thousand people (for extreme poverty, this number exceeds 324 thousand).

4. In calculating this ICBE (index of well-being), the authors retained 11 attributes which can be classified according to 3 headings: possession of durable goods (possession of: radio, TV, refrigerator and telephone), housing conditions (access to drinking water, the existence of toilets, the type of housing - decent or not -, the quality of the ground and the number of people per room) and education (literacy of the wife).

5. It should be noted that the IMH is based on the inclusion of the following variables: general mortality - literacy - drinking water supply - sanitation service and unemployment.

6. For the calculation of the MPI (and the various related indices), the 2011 Human Development Report gives us the following insight into the calculation methodology: "Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) identifies multiple deprivations at the individual level in education, health and standard of living. It uses micro data from household surveys, and—unlike the Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index—all the

indicators needed to construct the measure must come from the same survey. More details can be found in Alkire and Santos (2010). Methodology Each person is assigned a deprivation score according to his or her household's deprivations in each of the 10 component indicators. The maximum score is 100 percent, with each dimension equally weighted (thus the maximum score in each dimension is 33.3 percent). The education and health dimensions have two indicators each, so each component is worth 5/3 (or 16.7 percent). The standard of living dimension has six indicators, so each component is worth 5/9 (or 5.6 percent). The thresholds are as follows: • Education: having no household member who has completed five years of schooling and having at least one school-age child (up to grade 8) who is not attending school. • Health: having at least one household member who is malnourished and having had one or more children die. • Standard of living: not having electricity, not having access to clean drinking water, not having access to adequate sanitation, using "dirty" cooking fuel (dung, wood or charcoal), having a home with a dirt floor, and owning no car, truck or similar motorized vehicle while owning at most one of these assets: bicycle, motorcycle, radio, refrigerator, telephone or television. To identify the multidimensionally poor, the deprivation scores for each household are summed to obtain the household deprivation, c. A cut-off of 33.3 percent, which is the equivalent of one-third of the weighted indicators, is used to distinguish between the poor and nonpoor. If c is 33.3 percent or greater, that household (and everyone in it) is multidimensionally poor. Households with a deprivation score greater than or equal to 20 percent but less than 33.3 percent are vulnerable to or at risk of becoming multidimensionally poor. Households with a deprivation score of 50 percent or

higher are severely multidimensionally poor. The MPI value is the product of two measures: the multidimensional headcount ratio and the intensity (or breadth) of poverty." (Cf. UNDP, *Human development report 2011*, pp.172-174) (Report in English).

7. Deprivation concerns the various indicators of the aforementioned components (education, health and living conditions).

8. In October 2012, the Singaporean company Wealth-X published its second annual report online, which identifies the number of people considered to be very wealthy in the world. In this report, Tunisia occupies a "good place" with 70 people considered as very rich who possess together (cumulatively) a heritage estimated at 9 billion dollars (14 billion dinars in 2012), i.e. an average of 200 million dinars per person (while we have counted in our country more than a million and half of the poor, nearly 500,000 of whom live in absolute poverty!).

9. The Gini index is a synthetic quantity that indicates the degree of concentration of income or expenditure. The Gini index is between 0 and 1. The more it tends towards 1, the higher the concentration, and the more it tends towards 0, the lower the concentration (G=0, zero concentration or even distribution; G=1, maximum concentration or maximum inequality).

10. We note that for the Arab countries, Yemen and Mauritania are classified among the countries with low human development. However, their HDIs (respectively 0.489 and 0.477 in 2005) are very close to those of countries with average human development.

11. This paragraph is a summary of the 2015 NIS survey (Map of poverty in Tunisia, September 2020) on the relationship

between poverty and some socio-economic variables (INS, 2020, pp. 23-36).

• Most of the references are in French, that's why we left the original title of the book or article.