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## Chapter 2

### The Renewal of Local Elites in Times of “Participation” in Morocco

Yasmine Berriane

#### Introduction

This chapter contributes to the literature on the making of elites in Africa by analyzing recent transformations that have led, in Morocco, to the emergence of a new kind of local elite whose legitimacy rests upon its participation in the associational sphere. This sphere has expanded rapidly since the end of the 1990. In this analysis, my aim is to go beyond interpretations that focus merely on the instrumentalization of such actors through upgraded authoritarian regimes. I will rather focus on the way new local elites come to legitimize and account for their role as key intermediaries within an expanding associational sphere by drawing upon diverse registers and norms that refer to the two main forms of government that constitute Morocco’s hybrid political system: participatory governance and monarchical rule. Building on Michael Bratton’s critique of views that limit “associational life to activity that is at odds with the state” (1989: 418), this chapter shows, more generally, how associational life may also contribute to the renewal of local elites. Research on Morocco’s political elites has been dominated by three main strands. The first and main focus of this literature lies on the monarch and his entourage, also known as the *makhzen*,<sup>1</sup> and on the foundations of this particular type of political system built upon an understanding of power that sees the king as the sole supplier of symbols of authority and the main architect of the dominant political culture (Tozy 1999; Hammoudi 1997; Leveau 1985; Waterbury 1970). Several authors have further studied the making and (un)making of the state bourgeoisie that is connected to the palace and represented by powerful individuals and families who are legitimized by their descent from the Prophet (*shorfa* families), their religious knowledge and expertise (the *ulama*), their mercantile activities, or, since the mid-1970s, their background as highly educated nonpartisan technocrats (Benhaddou 1997; Vermeren 2002; Tessler 1982). The transformation of this state bourgeoisie is intimately linked to global and national economic and political developments, to the growing monopoly of the palace over the economic sector, and—more recently—to the emergence of a new group of entrepreneurs who gained political power against the backdrop of economic liberalization and privatization (Bogaert 2018: 95–122; Oubenal and Zeroual 2017; Catusse 2008).

As a constitutional monarchy, Morocco is also ruled by an elected parliament and government led by a head of government who is appointed by the monarch following legislative elections.

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<sup>1</sup> The notion of *makhzen* has a very broad meaning. It “is closely associated with monarchy’s inner circles of power. The notion has changed over time to mean coercive state apparatus, as well as the education, health care, administration and economic services the state provides” (Maghraoui 2011: 698).

The relationship between the monarchy and the representatives of the political parties rests upon an implicit political pact and a political culture of compromise and negotiation that has evolved over time (Tozy 2010, 2008). A second strand of the literature on elites has therefore explored elected elites by studying the role of political parties in the making of the Moroccan state post-independence (Burke 1971), followed by studies either analyzing the contribution of elected elites to the development of democracy (Storm 2007) or their role in maintaining the monarchical system (Barwig 2012; Zerhouni 2002). More recently, Mounia Bennani-Chraïbi (2013) has conducted an extensive study highlighting the differences between “parties of activists” and “parties of notables” and identifying the sociopolitical, ideological, and socio-professional characteristics of the leading members of these parties. While women have long remained absent from this literature, their growing number within the body of elected representatives has led to a rise in the publication of studies dealing with this process (Berriane 2016b; Darhour and Krit 2012).

The third strand of the literature on elites in Morocco focuses on the local arena and, more particularly, on the role played by various forms of local (urban and rural) elites in the making of the political order. Since Morocco’s independence in 1956, local elites have known many transformations that have been summarized by Tozy (2003) in three main phases. During the “time of rural notables,” representatives of the traditional rural elite acted as allies of the monarch and contributed to neutralizing oppositional elites that were developing in the cities (Leveau 1985). The “time of civil servants” started in the second half of the 1970s when public servants entered local politics through their election in communal districts. With the 1990s started the “time of a relative fragmentation of the elite,” characterized by technocrats’, entrepreneurs’, and civil society activists’ emergence as local political players (El Maoula Iraki 2003).

Building upon this periodization, I will argue in this chapter that local elites have further fragmented and diversified during the last two decades, opening up to new social categories. Through their participation in the associational sphere, actors with limited social capital, often unemployed and belonging to the working class or the lower middle class, have been able not only to climb the social ladder but also to become part of the local decision-making apparatus as political actors. These transformations reflect changes that have become apparent in today’s Morocco: the increasing number of local associations, the introduction of new resources into the local associational sphere, and the inclusion of civil society actors into the decision-making process. Similar trends have been noticed in other parts of Africa, north and south of the Sahara, where associations have become spaces in which social and political notabilities are being constructed (Ben Néfissa 2002; Woods 1994; Lucas 1994).

In her analysis of this “participative phenomenon” in Morocco, Irene Bono (2010) first identifies a renewal of the “art of making civil society,” an expansion of the category of what is, in Morocco, defined as “civil society” and a transformation of the nature of the actors that make it up. She shows that these transformations come from a top-down renewal of the regulatory norms that govern participation in associations dedicated to the development of the country. This analysis concurs with interpretations that read current transformations of elites in North Africa and the Middle East as a result of the instrumentalization of such actors through

upgraded authoritarian regimes (Heydemann 2007). For my part, I wish to concentrate on the role that these new norms played in the life trajectories of local association<sup>2</sup> leaders by emphasizing how they reappropriate these new values to establish themselves locally and account for their role by simultaneously differentiating themselves from the local population and highlighting their social and territorial belonging to this same population. More particularly, I will show that these newly established norms have contributed to providing local associative actors (both men and women) with new “lines of argumentation” (based upon the ideas of “autochthony,” “professionalism,” and “nonpartisanship”) that they combine with older sources of elite legitimacy (notably their symbolic “closeness to the king”).

In the first part, I will present my case study, describe the emergence of these local associational leaders, and justify the use of “associational elite” to qualify them. I will then focus more particularly on the different modes of accountability used by associational leaders in working-class neighborhoods of the city of Casablanca to legitimize their newly attained role as representatives of the local population. The conclusion will open up to some more general reflections on the transformation of local elites in times of participation.

### **The Emergence of Local “Associational Elites” in Morocco**

Concepts such as “elite” are not “fixed or tangible social science categories.” Therefore, in order to distinguish between different kinds of elites, “qualifying adjectives” are often used (Shore 2002: 4). It may, however, seem odd to qualify an elite as “associational” in light of the opposition commonly made between state and civil society actors (Bratton 1989). The aim of this chapter is precisely to question this dichotomy by showing that associational life is an avenue not only for grassroots participation, but also for the recruitment, integration, and renewal of local elites. The term “associational elites,” therefore, refers in this chapter to a category of individuals who assume a leadership role within a grassroots association, whether as president, vice president, secretary-general, or other executive function. As I will show below, their leadership position and their mediating functions between the grassroots and the state provides them with privileged access to resources allocated to state officials, bureaucracies, and services for the implementation of local development programs. This privileged access enhances their social status and popularity at the level of their neighborhood, city district, or village. They gain authority and social prestige and are able to build clientelist relationships that represent their power base. This position enables them further to play a critical political role as privileged interlocutors of local state officials, to be elected in the municipal district, and to participate actively in local decision-making. This is how women and men from very modest economic and social backgrounds were recently able to become part of the local decision-making apparatus and to be viewed as key leaders within their community of origin. In this context of participatory governance, elites may therefore be associational. I will illustrate this in more detail below.

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<sup>2</sup> I prefer using the word “association” rather than “NGO” here since there is no clear line separating these organizations from state institutions. This will become clear throughout the chapter. In addition, the term “association” is a better translation of the Arabic term *jam'iyya* used to name this kind of civic organizations in Morocco.

The first increase in the number of associations is noticeable in the 1980s, when structural adjustment programs were introduced in Morocco, leading to the state's withdrawal from the social policy sector. This is the period when associations working in the fields of social, economic, and cultural development and human rights organizations appeared. This trend increased in the late 1990s coinciding with the enthronization of Mohammed VI in 1999 after his father passed away. The new king came to power with a whole reform package, stressing the importance of human rights and freedom of speech and using terms such as "participation," "decentralization," and "good governance" in his public rhetoric and in the reforms to be implemented. These new norms are clearly linked to global contemporary development discourses and neoliberal governance agendas that stress the importance of decentralizing power and of including citizens in policymaking. More particularly, in 2002, a reform of the code of public liberties regulating associational life enabled associations to receive funding from public and private institutions. While associations already existed, their number increased substantially during this period.

A turning point came after 2005, when the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH) was launched by the king with the support of the European Union and the World Bank as well as private donors such as the king of Saudi Arabia. This initiative was presented as one of the new king's long-term projects to fight poverty, illiteracy, and social exclusion in certain rural and urban areas considered the most deprived parts of the country (Bergh 2012; Bono 2010; Berriane 2010). The INDH included local associations as key organizations representing the interests of local populations and participating in designing and implementing local development projects. Projects that could generate revenues at the local level and that included underrepresented social categories (such as women) were particularly encouraged. Having a registered association became a condition to get access to this funding.

The implementation of programs such as the INDH led to an increase in the numbers of a particular type of association within poor neighborhoods and villages: small, locally based, and formally apolitical organizations specializing in social, developmental, and educational issues and targeting mainly women and young people.<sup>3</sup> These organizations offer a broad range of services, ranging from various forms of training (such as literacy,<sup>4</sup> sewing, IT, and catering) to sport activities, providing legal advice, distributing clothes and food supplies, supporting unemployed youngsters, and organizing community clean-ups, vacation camps, and medical campaigns that include treatment at a nominal fee. As highlighted by Driss Khrouz, "Requests for help are so many and varied that learning to do 'a bit of everything' comes with the territory" (2008: 48).

At the national level, less than thirty thousand associations existed in the late 1990s, while today an estimated fifty thousand are registered, most of them having been created since the end of the 1990s. This process has been coupled with the development of an infrastructure aimed at

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<sup>3</sup> These associations are similar to what is referred to, in other African countries, as "local development associations" or, in some cases, "home town associations" (Woods 1994).

<sup>4</sup> According to official estimates of the high commissioner for the plan based on the census of 2014, the illiteracy rate in Morocco is declining: it moved from 87 percent in 1960 to 32 percent in 2014. Yet illiteracy still represents a striking feature of Morocco's population, especially of the categories of women (41.9 percent illiteracy), rural population (47.7 percent illiteracy), and people older than fifty (61 percent illiteracy).

giving associations spaces to organize their activities. A whole range of public centers aimed at offering social services and cultural activities through associations have since appeared throughout the country. While these centers are supervised by the state, they are managed by local associations that not only offer activities within these centers but are also responsible for finding the necessary funds to finance them (Berriane 2016a). The reformed constitution of 2011 includes articles reinforcing the role of civil society organizations (and more particularly associations) in public life and the implementation of concrete measures such as broadening the prerogatives of the deputy minister in charge of relations with the parliament, who is now also in charge of relations with civil society organizations.

While opening up spaces of negotiation and social action, associations function also as spaces of social promotion and political inclusion (Berriane 2010). This is particularly true for local and social development associations active in poor and formerly deprived regions. The top-down promotion of this kind of organization has contributed to the emergence of new elites to which the necessary means of becoming locally influential were given. This is particularly striking in regions that used to receive little attention from authorities, such as the working-class neighborhoods of Casablanca in which I conducted my research. Actors who did not belong to the traditional local notabilities or to the intellectual and economic elite and actors belonging to underrepresented social categories (such as women) have been able not only to climb the social ladder but also to become part of the local decision-making apparatus. They were included within local commissions working on the implementation of the INDH or are acting as key intermediaries between representatives of the state and local populations.

Their status rests upon their ability to redistribute public resources to the neighborhood by channeling funding and public assistance downward. The local population receives these funds indirectly through the activities proposed by the association. Wage earners and those receiving even minimal financial compensation in exchange for their monitoring or teaching activities within the association must also be counted among the beneficiaries of associational work. In areas where unemployment is rampant, such income sources are of an importance that should not be underestimated. At the same time, association leaders are also spokespeople for the local population (and especially for the beneficiaries of their association) in dealings with the local authorities. They fulfil this role, for example, by lobbying the authorities to facilitate access to certain administrative documents (like national identity cards or birth certificates). Their newly acquired status of key development actors allows them to draw the authorities' attention to problems the local population is experiencing or to organize meetings between the latter and public officials. The number of members or beneficiaries of their association gives the main representatives of the association an ability to mobilize that they can capitalize on with the local authorities in exchange for privileged access to public resources and support for their community work, or even their own personal projects. The activities organized by these leaders—both male and female—are therefore ways of showing their mobilization abilities and popularity, as measured by the number of individuals in attendance.

In all, the leaders interviewed could be considered, according to the language of current development policies, “local development courtiers” since they “serve as intermediaries to drain . . . external resources relevant to what is commonly referred to as development assistance” (de

Sardan 1995: 160, trans. by author). But insofar as how they contribute, as mediators, to disseminate technological and scientific knowledge (literacy, training, questions related to health, etc.) at the local level, they are also “agents of development” (de Sardan 1995: 155–56). Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan draws a distinction between these two types of interventions, but my interlocutors are equally comfortable with both. This double function provides them with a certain social prestige and quickly contributes to establishing their notoriety in the neighborhood, sometimes at the district level. Their intermediary role, the privileged connections they maintain between the local representatives, and the ability to attract and redistribute material resources underlie the affirmation of social notability. The INDH reinforced this role by allowing community organization leaders to drain a portion of the proceeds from this initiative toward associations and their beneficiaries. By creating new spaces for interaction between local elected officials, public authorities, and association leaders, the INDH has also consolidated the latter’s relational capital.

At the same time, this intermediary capacity also allows for the affirmation of an “associational clientelism” (Bennani-Chraïbi 2004: 42–43). Links of patronage tie these association leaders to their “clientele” of beneficiaries: in exchange for services provided to the local population, they earn their support and loyalty. It is therefore interesting to see that this clientelism can also sustain the ties that exist between association leaders and certain government agents (the administration’s civil servants, low-level state clerks, etc.). In exchange for exclusive access to the services proposed by the organizations, the latter guarantee them their support by facilitating, for example, certain administrative processes or by providing them with insider information on subjects such as funding or provisions made for local residents. The role of this associational clientelism fully expands during electoral campaigns, which some association leaders participate in as local relays or candidates.

Indeed, the symbolic and material resources gained through this process have led to an increase in the number of association representatives who campaign as candidates during municipal elections (Royaume du Maroc and USAID 2010). Both their newly gained local popularity and their alleged capacity to mobilize and communicate with people make them privileged local candidates who attract the attention of political parties. This process is particularly striking when looking at female trajectories. While most studies on women’s access to political offices in Morocco used to highlight the importance of family connections in empowering women to participate in political parties, public affairs, and electoral campaigns (Sater 2007: 736), their participation in an association represents today a new gateway to local political positions (Berriane 2015).

Thus, recent transformations illustrate how state programs aimed at reinforcing the associational sphere have led to a renewal of the local elite, through the emergence of an “associational notability.” But—paraphrasing Chris Shore (2002: 2)—how does this new elite legitimize its role and maintain its hegemony in the current period of social and economic change that Moroccan society (like other North African societies) is undergoing? I will tackle this question in the following section by drawing on extensive fieldwork conducted between 2006 and 2010 and between 2012 and 2014 among local association leaders living in suburban working-class neighborhoods of the city of Casablanca, situated in the districts of Sidi Moumen,

Hay Mohammadi, and Sidi Bernoussi.<sup>5</sup> Over this period, I interviewed and observed the work of more than fifty association leaders (both women and men, the youngest being in her late twenties and the oldest in her mid-sixties), using different techniques—in situ observations as well as biographical and semi-open interviews.

As both an industrial and an economic capital, and as the largest city in the country, Casablanca has been the subject of special government attention over the years. This applies in particular to the implementation of development programs set up in several target neighborhoods identified as “underequipped,” “poor,” and “marginalized.” This trend gained in importance after the terrorist attacks of May 2003, whose main protagonists came from slums situated on the outskirts of the city, and intensified even more after the INDH was launched. While the case of Casablanca is certainly specific, this city is also a living laboratory (Rabinow 1995) where we can observe the effects of demographic, social, and political mutations induced by such factors as urbanization, the reconfiguration of political action, and the dissemination of new norms of participation affecting, albeit in varying ways, the whole country.

### **Proximity and Local Expertise: “Autochthony” as Capital**

In order to legitimize their roles as associational leaders and as representatives of the local inhabitants, these local association representatives emphasize their rootedness in the neighborhood in which they are active and in which all of them also live. They highlight their social and territorial belonging to the local community by picturing themselves as “daughters” or “sons” of the neighborhood in which they grew up and into which their parents moved as part of the first waves of migration that brought rural populations from the countryside to Casablanca. They further insist on their working-class and rural roots, assigning great importance to their relatives’ rural origins, the tribes to which they belong, and the difficult circumstances surrounding their adjustment to city life.

The neighborhoods in which I have conducted my research appeared in times of the French Protectorate in the context of the rapid expansion and industrialization of Casablanca. At that time, the city attracted consecutive waves of rural populations migrating from different parts of the country to find work in Morocco’s industrial capital. They settled down in the outskirts of the city, where the biggest slums of the country developed. Today, the districts of Sidi Moumen, Hay Mohammadi, and Sidi Bernoussi have developed into socially mixed urban spaces in which one finds slums and social housing but also modest residential areas. The association leaders I interviewed were all heading local organizations and were either born in the districts into which their parents migrated from the countryside in the 1940s or 1950s or, at a very young age, accompanied their parents in their rural exodus.

It is interesting to note that the emphasis placed on these aspects of their life trajectories often reappears when they interact with their associations’ beneficiaries, local authorities, or potential funders. Their rural origins and working-class background, the story of their parent’s migration

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<sup>5</sup> The research conducted between 2006 and 2010 was part of my doctoral dissertation (see Berriane 2013). During the following years I have continued my research as postdoctoral research fellow within the associational sphere of working-class neighborhoods in Casablanca, concentrating more particularly on the making of spaces of participation (see Berriane 2016a).



to the city, their belonging to the local community, and their attachment to the neighborhood represent a weighty resource that the current context allows them to convert into associative capital. Yet this “rhetoric of autochthony” (Hilgers 2011) takes different shapes, depending on the interlocutor the association leaders are facing.

When they speak with the members of their associations or with neighborhood inhabitants (especially those who moved to the city after the 1980s, with the more recent waves of migration), the language they use tends to change. It is sprinkled with words that are more common in the countryside than in the city and with allusions to rural practices and habits. When mentioning their associations, they tend, for instance, to use the word *jmâ‘a*, which refers to traditional village councils. When they face local authorities or potential funders, they emphasize instead their intimate (firsthand) knowledge of the needs of the population who lives there. They insist on the fact that they were not only born in the neighborhood but also that they have, for the most part, lived there all their lives. Consequently, they have directly confronted the problems that the current inhabitants are experiencing, which not only allows them to better identify their needs but provides them with the tools to better communicate with this population. In so doing, they avail themselves of a legitimacy that rests on their role as experts whose expertise is based on “autochthonous” knowledge of the terrain and of local specificities.

If these new local elites can transform their social origins into resources, it is notably because they are valued in the current context. The insistence on local expertise is a part of a discourse on the importance of community outreach, which is undertaken as close to the ground as possible. Proximity, as a “label” and “norm” in current public policies, manifests itself at the local level through certain tools, such as a participatory approach or participatory diagnosis, which stipulate that the populations concerned must participate in the identification of their needs and the problems they need solved. These work methods and the vocabulary that refers to them have been transmitted to the association representatives through the intermediary of training undertaken either within the framework of the INDH, or through training proposed by other national or international organizations and bodies.

Both male and female association leaders refer to their social origin and to their belonging to the neighborhood to account for their specific capacity to implement participatory approaches based on the idea of “proximity.” Women, however, tend to valorize their own role even more by insisting on their specific contributions to outreach work, reproducing certain gender stereotypes. The competencies that outreach work demands are often connected to characteristics that are generally tied to representations of femininity and especially to women’s “domestic” competencies such as providing a listening ear to one’s entourage, and caring about having a clean and healthy living environment. In addition, the easier access that women have to homes allows them—so the argumentation put forward—to better communicate with the population, allowing certain messages to more easily circulate in the neighborhood, over a cup of tea or around a sewing circle.

By insisting on their local expertise, the leaders not only legitimize their actions vis-à-vis the local population but also establish themselves in an increasingly competitive field where a multitude of associations—who are more or less well established—try to create a space for themselves on the local associative stage and to access the resources necessary to ensure the

continuance of their association. In this context, the “proximity” and “autochthony” argument takes on greater importance in the power struggle between local association actors (who are often newcomers) and long-established civil society actors who head national development organizations that started appearing in the early 1990s, who have access to much more consequential social capital, but who are not natives of the neighborhood. In numerous interviews, the local association leaders tended to discredit the monopoly and experience that national associations pride themselves on, by emphasizing their own “well-founded” and “firsthand” knowledge of the problems plaguing the community. It is—so the argumentation put forward—the local expertise of the leaders that allows them to identify the real needs of the neighborhood’s men and women and to act as their representatives.

### **Professionalization: Guaranteeing Quality, Legitimizing Wages**

The emergence of association leaders as key political actors also results from the current valorization—through development policies—of training, qualification, and professionalism. Moreover, the importance given to associations as vectors of development and the scope of the projects implemented, are less and less compatible with volunteer work done by temporary and undertrained community organizers. This trend toward professionalization and qualification within the community organization field is also a result of the new model of associational work promoted by state programs and international organizations: management, durability, and continuity. In 2007, for instance, the Ministry of Social Development, Family and Solidarity launched a qualification program to distribute quality labels to associations that have signed an “ethical charter” and that have accepted monitoring by the ministry.

Yet in order to reach the expected levels of “quality,” specific skills are necessary: notably the ability to conceive of, implement, and manage a project. In this new context, the fact that all association leaders have been to school and that some of them have studied a few years at university adds to their legitimacy as local associational elites. Their academic capital notably allows them to more easily access the trainings proposed by different government-financed national or international organizations. The INDH has put special emphasis on the importance of training by even proposing a university program lasting several months that would prepare associative and administrative executives for the management of the INDH projects. These trainings target all of the association leaders implicated in the INDH process: workshops on local development and participative work, communication techniques, project implementation modules, accounting techniques, and so on.

Most interviewed actors have relatively mild opinions regarding the effectiveness of these trainings, but they emphasize their symbolic meaning, since the fact of having been chosen by local officials and trained by well-known representatives of Morocco’s “civil society” adds to their important status as agents of development and as legitimate spokespersons of the local population. These trainings are also an opportunity to get in contact with local officials and civil servants, who take part in the same trainings. The status of an “educated and trained woman or man” facilitates their access to the public sphere, puts them in a position apart, and confers upon them more respectability. They are instructors, guides, and experts on what goes on behind the scenes both at an administrative level and within bureaucratic hierarchies. They know how to

“talk to the ones in charge” and are in contact with those who are needed to help neighborhood residents who do not have access to the same networks and knowledge.

The reliance on academic programs and training has a threefold function. It is first a way to highlight one’s role as a community organization representative and to be noticed by the authorities. It is also a way to distinguish oneself from other association leaders: the distinction between those who are “educated” and those who are “basically illiterate” is very common. It notably allows the association leaders in question to differentiate themselves from those they consider to be amateurs—both men and women—who do not really know what they are doing. The men and women I interviewed emphasized their training as a mark of quality, the guarantee of a serious and professional engagement with the community that is based on knowledge acquired through a state-recognized education. In this context, the curriculum vitae gains a primordial importance. Refining and maintaining one’s curriculum vitae is accomplished by means of many different trainings, which can at times appear excessive. By extension, training becomes institutionalized more and more as a necessary condition for all associational engagement.

The importance given to education and training is also apparent through the emphasis certain local association representatives place on what it is that differentiates them from other neighborhood residents, more specifically from the associations’ beneficiaries. Paradoxically, while their proximity to the local population and their belonging to the neighborhood contributes to establishing their role as “autochthonous experts” and legitimate representatives of the population’s interests, their status as educated women and men comes from distancing themselves from that same local population. In order to highlight their own educational background, they emphasize the fact that the majority of the inhabitants of their district are “illiterate,” “uneducated,” or even “ignorant.” Therefore, the problems that they encounter in their work are often identified as being caused by “the mentality of the people around here,” by their “conservatism” and their lack of “openness to changes taking place.” This last point highlights the inherent paradox of their status as intermediaries, which both implies a proximity to the population they represent and a distance from them, due to the competencies they pride themselves on having as association leaders.

The importance given to the professionalization of local association actors is accompanied by a tendency toward paid employment within the associational sphere. Professionalization and the provision of salaries are quite common in the big and well-established associations that work at the national level, as they have access to much more funding on a regular basis; whereas funds are still limited in the case of neighborhood associations. However, the phenomenon is gaining ground within grassroots associations as well, and expanded after the launch of the INDH. The funds allocated within the framework of this program not only allow for the funding of projects, but also offer chances for employment as instructors or project coordinators.

The world of associational work is becoming more and more like a labor market, an alternative to the precariousness of daily professional existence. This evolution echoes the arrival of new funding initiatives in the field of community outreach but it also comes from the deployment of community action within social strata that are less privileged than those that benefited from it historically. More than a motivating factor, the possibility of transforming community action

into remunerated work serves to secure its sustainability. The costs of all active engagement within the association (means of transportation, telephone, etc.) are such that they cannot be borne, in the long run, by association representatives who have limited material resources. The ability to generate revenue is even more important in the case of women, as most of them depend on their families for financial support. The appearance of these women in the associative field remains a marginal phenomenon, in large part due to the restrictions imposed by those closest to them on their public activities. In such a context, a salary also serves as an essential alibi that justifies and legitimizes associational work outside of the home.

Talking about compensation raises the question of volunteer work, which represents a powerful symbolic resource on which most association leaders have to rely to legitimize their work: “The symbolic arm of volunteer work provides dignity (as opposed to politics) and respectability (defense of the general interest)” (Barthélémy 2000: 199). According to this thinking, only the desire to serve the general interest and to help one’s fellowman should motivate the associative actor. Any form of personal compensation, whether it be material or symbolic, is seen as contrary to the values that are supposed to govern the associative sphere. Yet the transition between volunteerism (which is central to the image used by association representatives to legitimize their role) and paid employment can be fluid, and the preservation of the image of volunteer, completely disinterested work bears the risk of rapidly falling apart as soon as financial compensation becomes more important within an association.

The paradox posed by this split between volunteering and professionalization obliges those interviewed to juggle different forms of legitimization. When speaking about volunteering, the association leaders tend to emphasize the sacrifices that they themselves do not hesitate to make for the good of the association and by extension for the neighborhood residents. In other words, since the value of the price paid (in sacrifices) largely exceeds that of any compensation received, such compensation can be considered minimal and not as the source of any personal enrichment. The most established association leaders—those who receive regular remuneration in exchange for their work within the association—justify their access to revenue by emphasizing their professionalism. If they receive pay for their work it is above all because the services that they provide are of a quality superior to those provided by most other associative actors (both men and women) classified as amateurs. In this context, remuneration becomes a symbol of quality. Moreover, when they discuss the question of wages (which rarely happens), they almost never use the term remuneration (*khlâs*), but rather use the term “compensation” (*ta’wîd*) or “punctual assistance” (*musâ’ada mu’aqqata*), which allows them to euphemize the material benefits they gain from their activities.

This euphemizing of their compensation has become even more important now that certain representations transmitted about associations tend to describe them as means of personal enrichment that attract shady individuals. This image has gained prominence with the implementation of an increased number of local development programs financed by the state or by national and international donors. It became even stronger once the first evaluations of the implemented INDH projects showed that funds were misappropriated and that funded projects failed to be implemented. To counterbalance this image and legitimize their role vis-à-

vis the local population, those affiliated with associations have to make more effort to highlight the virtuous character of associational life.

### **Virtuous Associations and Corrupt Political Parties: Apoliticism as a Virtue**

Among the sources of legitimization that those interviewed have access to, one can count their distance from “politics.” Between the 1960s and the early 1990s, during the so-called years of lead, when the repression against political opponents was at its highest, politics were associated with risks that implicated the closed-off context of the time, whereas today they have become “an expression of the opportunism” of elected officials and political leaders (Tozy 2007: 199). It is above all from the latter that the association leaders try to distance themselves.

By distancing themselves from parties and political representatives, the association leaders I studied emphasize their own integrity. Weakened by several decades of restrictions, transformed into synonyms of corruption and cronyism, the political parties have, essentially, lost their credibility. By putting distance between themselves and political parties, association representatives valorize an alternative path to political legitimacy. All while denigrating the parties’ actions, they highlight the “useful” contributions of associations to the invention of a “different kind of politics” (Catusse 2002: 308), founded on social action, closer to the population and more aware of its needs. They highlight in this way their alternative role as effective and efficient intermediaries for the local population, a role that local elected officials, according to them, have ceased to fill. The public discourse provides them with the references needed to accentuate the distinction that they make between associations and parties, a distinction that provides them with yet another way of accounting for their legitimacy. To add weight to their statements, they notably allude to the way in which the king values and supports associations, while he tends to devalue the role played by political parties.<sup>6</sup>

A first expression of their public distancing from political parties is tied to the way in which some association leaders construct the narratives of their career paths. Political experiences play a very minor, or sometimes even nonexistent, role in the narratives of those who have recently joined the associative sphere. Even when they have had such experiences (notably as members of a party, or even as local candidates during past municipal elections), this part of their history disappears from the narratives that they share today. The relationship with the political past is different in the case of association leaders who have participated in protests during the 1970s or 1980s. Instead of hiding this experience, they emphasize it and use it to legitimize their current engagement. Unlike the experiences they had within political parties, participation in left- and far-left-leaning movements during the 1970s and 1980s is perceived by these association representatives as valuable because it allows them not only to secure a place for themselves within the history of a certain kind of political activism but also to situate themselves in the continuation of mobilizations that have increased in importance today. The reference group here is that of former political opponents who, after having been victims of repression during the 1970s and 1980s, became a part of the associative milieu during the 1990s

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<sup>6</sup> The condemnation of political parties by the king reached a new level in his “Throne Day” speech of July 2017, in which he highlighted the deficiencies of the political class. As shown by Mounia Bennani-Chraïbi (2017), this has been a recurrent official narrative based on the myth that “the king is good, the political class is bad”—a tool used by the palace to legitimize itself and discredit political parties.

and have achieved a certain status or even a certain level of prestige (Filleule and Bennani-Chraïbi 2003: 82). They are recognized within today's associational sphere as being "true" or even "great" activists.

In other words, not just anyone can claim to be an activist: there are "real" and "fake" ones, "great" and "small" ones. The example of former political opponents is held up as a model, and the designation of "activist" has a positive connotation today. Moreover, the distinction is clear—with regards to both men and women—between the associative actor (*al-fâ'il al-jam'âwi*) and the associative activist (*al-munâdil al-jam'âwi*), the second designation having a higher symbolic value than the first. By emphasizing their past participation in leftist movements or far-left movements, association leaders claim both titles. This allows them to distinguish themselves from the majority of associative representatives who can only claim the first title, that of associative actor. But all while claiming their past as engaged protestors, these association leaders clearly differentiate between their work and that of political parties.

This distancing is accompanied by a nearly systematic contrast between associations that are described as being "virtuous," "active," "transparent," "aware of the people's true needs," on the one hand, and political parties that are "corrupt," "disconnected from the population's reality," and "motivated by their own interests," on the other. The differentiation between parties and associations also takes place through the emphasis that the associative sphere puts on freedom, as opposed to the ideological restrictions that allegiance to a political party entails. The conflictual dimension of politics and the obligation to "take a position" are considered to be signs of ideological confinement and loss of liberty. In order to clearly mark the difference between themselves and political parties but also to emphasize their own integrity, they work to denigrate associations with close political ties. Any rapprochement between associations and political parties is decried because it is a sign both that the association in question is being manipulated by a political party and that its directors are not solely motivated by the best interests of the residents of the neighborhood, but are above all concerned with their own political interests.

This vision is also maintained through contrasting "active" associations, which offer concrete and efficient action, and political parties that no longer fulfill their representative role, take no interest in what is happening locally, and work only to advance their own interests. Association leaders highlight the difference between "the social," which is understood to mean a large domain that is disconnected from partisan politics, and power struggles between and within political parties. Interestingly these same distinctions are reproduced during electoral campaigns when local association leaders run as political candidates. They base most of their campaigns on their specific capacity as representatives of an association to renew and enhance the political sphere, and a distinction is made throughout the campaigns between "good" associations and "bad" political parties (Berriane 2015). References to their association enable the candidates to illustrate their privileged relationship with the state through their access to resources that it makes available, holding out the prospect of offering, through their association, special help and services for all supporters who agree to vote for them. In a context such as Morocco, where "voters . . . primarily seek to reap patronage benefits" and therefore "support candidates whom they believe they will deliver advantages to them" (Gandhi and Lust-Okar

2009: 409), associations become new concrete avenues through which patronage and access to state resources can be promised to voters.

### **Legitimized by the King: The Monarch's Actions as a Key Reference Point**

While most of the interviewed local association leaders distance themselves from politics, several of them use the king as a primary frame of reference to whom they attribute the characteristics of an accomplished associative actor, indirectly drawing parallels between him and themselves. They further highlight various moments that link them to the king, emphasizing their role in implementing one of the monarch's main sites of initiative: social and communal action. As already mentioned in the introduction, highlighting one's connection to the king and his family or, more generally, to the palace has been one of the main sources of legitimacy for elites throughout Morocco's history post-independence (Benhaddou 1997). In the era of participative governance, grassroots associations use the same kind of argument by building connections to the king through their associative experience.

During the first interview conducted with Siham, this fifty-year-old head of a local association for disabled women and children failed to indicate that she had taken part in the 2002 legislative campaign as a political candidate. However, she chose to frame the official narrative of her trajectory as a social actor around another significant moment: her meeting with King Mohammed VI when he was still crown prince.

While we were talking, he told me, "Siham, do you have an association?" I told him, "No, Your Majesty (mulây), I do not." "And you haven't thought about creating one?" I told him, "No, Your Majesty, I have never thought of it." . . . He said to me, "Think about creating an association and call it the Solidarity Association." The name came from him, not me. . . . He told me, "Create this association and you will have my full support." . . . I asked him, "But how will I see you, Your Majesty?" He said, "The same way as this time. You made your way to me; you will do the same next time." . . . And then, since that time, I've wanted to create an association. . . . The next time I'll go to see him in the name of the Solidarity Association!

Born in the early 1960s in Casablanca with a leg deformity, Siham moves with the help of crutches and today presides over an association that was created in 2004 and that helps the disabled. After having stopped her education early on, she trained as a seamstress before opening her own workshop on the ground floor of her family home. During the 1990s, she decided to follow the example of a friend who managed, a few months earlier, to have an audience with the crown prince, who was known for his actions in favor of those in need, which had earned him the nickname "prince of the poor." Siham spent six months at Rabat, waiting every day near the prince's palace, before being received. Upon meeting her, the prince granted her a concession to operate a taxi and a sum of money, before suggesting that she create an association.

As indicated by the above excerpt, Siham situates the premises of the creation of her grassroots association within that meeting. Through this story that has become famous throughout the neighborhood, she confers a royal genealogy on the organization that she presides over: the

crown prince is at the origin not only of the concept of this organization but also of its name. The manner of presenting her association as being the direct materialization of a royal will to see it created fits into the narrative shared among most of the association leaders interviewed: the king as the direct initiator of the dynamic that goes through the associative sphere. The “social,” as a national project initiated and carried out by the king, takes the place of the “political” in its partisan and competitive dimension. These representations rely on an official discourse that supports—notably since the advent of the INDH—development as a “national cause.” It has demonstrated that this cause distinguishes itself not only through its “consensual character,” which generates the “demobilization of forces which could destroy it,” but also “at a symbolic level, through the insertion of the Initiative into the patriotic imagination of the country” (Bono 2010: 21–22).

While seeming to play on this convention, Siham’s statement has the advantage of illustrating to what extent the king and his “long-term projects” are situated at the center of the frames of reference of most of the association leaders interviewed. In a number of interviews, the description of the king contrasted greatly with that of political actors. The latter were described as corrupt, inefficient, and disconnected from the real needs of the population, whereas the majority of the local association leaders attributed qualities such as intimate knowledge of the population’s needs (notably of the poor), dynamism, and rigor to the monarch. One cannot help but note the numerous parallels between the figure of the associative actor and that of the monarch, who represents the most accomplished example of an associative actor: a peerless champion and supporter of the social question.

On the ground, this perception is seen in the conviction that many people have that the association represents a sure pathway to become closer to the monarch. This concept is evidently maintained through numerous examples of local association leaders who have had the opportunity, by means of their associative activities, to meet the king—for a kiss on the hand, a photo, or some words exchanged—during the inauguration of a social center or during some official ceremony organized within the palace. Whenever one can approach the monarch, it is generally thought to be an opportunity to ask for his help, but these types of meetings also contribute to the valorization of the individual, who gains social prestige.

The emergence of the INDH has contributed to establishing the image of the monarch as a frame of reference for many of the association leaders interviewed. This program is generally seen as emanating directly from the king, the initiator, architect, and guarantor of a large-scale project. He has contributed to raising associations to the rank of institutions that are known and recognized by the state. Thus, certain association representatives believe not only that they have a particular status but also that they benefit—through the governor, the king’s local representative—from a direct connection to the palace. Such a perception is not based only on the recent valorization that local associations have achieved in the eyes of public authorities. It also comes from the lived experiences in their daily lives as association representatives as they have become privileged interlocutors, the most established ones with a direct contact to the governor. By adapting their strategies to this redistribution of resources and power, association leaders manage to legitimize and maintain their hegemony as local associational elites. At the



same time, they indirectly contribute to the redeployment and reaffirmation of the power of the *makhzen* and the weakening of the role played by local elected officials.

## **Conclusion**

It is apparent that the pro-participation policies established by the state over the past fifteen years have contributed to the renewal of local associative elites. Through their participation in the associational sphere, actors with limited social capital, often unemployed and belonging to the working class or the lower middle class, have been able not only to climb the social ladder but also to become part of the local decision-making apparatus as political actors. The emergence of new means of legitimization has played a decisive role in this. It has allowed the newcomers that I have studied to transform their social origins and competencies into ways to account for their role. In order to account for their role as association leaders and as local decision-makers and to assert their social notability, they combine various lines of argumentation. They highlight their own social and territorial belonging while simultaneously differentiating themselves from the local population through references to their educational capital and their professionalism. They further distance themselves from political parties as a way to prove their integrity. Paradoxically, these new lines of argumentation are combined with narratives that highlight their “closeness to the king,” an older source of elite legitimacy, which is reproduced, today, in a new “participative” form.

These trends reveal two things. On the one hand, they show that the associational sphere is not only a space that can be used by elites to reinforce their position and get access to more privileged elites (Woods 1994) or pursue novel strategies of class formation (Lucas 1994). In the current context, in which the implementation of participatory means of governance has become a norm, the associational sphere can also contribute to the emergence of new types of elites, even among populations that used to lack the necessary social, material, and symbolic capital to become an elite. This process of elite formation is made possible by the emergence of new frames of legitimacy that can be used as means of accountability. Within these new frameworks, autochthony becomes a guarantee for proximity and firsthand knowledge, instruction and remuneration an indicator of professionalism and better quality, and distance from political parties a proof of integrity.

On the other hand, this process of elite formation enables us also to question the often-assumed separation between the sphere of the state and that of associational life, which some authors portray as a “political space beyond the state’s purview” (Bratton 1989: 411). Recent developments of the associational sphere in Morocco illustrate the interconnectedness of both spheres. The increasing number of associations does not reflect a decline in the state but rather a redeployment of the state apparatus via associations. Local development associations such as those described in the current chapter make it possible for the state to redeploy itself indirectly at a lower cost by including many new actors in the government of the social sphere, renewing and diversifying the composition of its local elite (see also Berriane 2016a). The state—symbolized by its main representative, which is the person of the king—plays a central role in the frames of reference used by association leaders to account for their role and position. This example shows that the monarch remains a principal determinant behind elite circulation and upward mobility in Morocco.

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