

Manuscript version: Author's Accepted Manuscript

The version presented in WRAP is the author's accepted manuscript and may differ from the published version or Version of Record.

Persistent WRAP URL:

<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/122466>

How to cite:

Please refer to published version for the most recent bibliographic citation information. If a published version is known of, the repository item page linked to above, will contain details on accessing it.

Copyright and reuse:

The Warwick Research Archive Portal (WRAP) makes this work by researchers of the University of Warwick available open access under the following conditions.

Copyright © and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable the material made available in WRAP has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

Publisher's statement:

Please refer to the repository item page, publisher's statement section, for further information.

For more information, please contact the WRAP Team at: wrap@warwick.ac.uk.

The struggles of precarious youth in Tunisia: The case of the Kerkennah movement

Lorenzo Feltrin, University of Warwick, UK

Abstract

This article analyses the origins and the dynamics of the social movement against the energy corporation Petrofac that took place in the Tunisian archipelago of Kerkennah between 2011 and 2016. The Kerkennah movement is seen as part of a broader cycle of mobilisations for social justice that started in 2008 and continues to the present day. The main subjects of these mobilisations are young people lacking sources of regular income and their core demands are secure employment and local development. It is argued that communal solidarities were key in compensating for the lack of occupational cohesion among the protesters.

Introduction

In January 2016, Tunisia witnessed a nationwide wave of mobilisations following the suicide of unemployed graduate Ridha Yahyaoui during a protest for employment. The protagonists of the unrest were young people excluded from secure employment and regular sources of income. This rapid escalation of turmoil could not but remind us of the protests that, five years before, ignited the Arab Spring. Tunisia was in fact the first country in the region where popular mobilisations toppled the head of state, starting a cascade of revolts that quickly diffused from Morocco to Iraq. Of course, by 2016 the Tunisian political institutional framework had turned from a highly rigid dictatorship to a representative democracy, but the demands for secure employment and local development of the marginal regions remained eerily unchanged. In fact, while the 2011 Uprising achieved a level of civil and political rights never before seen in Tunisia, it was

clearly unable to set the country on a more socially inclusive developmental path. Moreover, political instability and terrorist attacks aggravated the economic downturn, leading to a worse standard of living for most Tunisians.

In this context, on 19 January 2016 in the Tunisian fishing archipelago of Kerkennah, a group of unemployed graduates set up a roadblock at the Petrofac gas field, bringing production to a halt. They demanded that the Jersey-registered British extractive corporation contribute to employment and development on the islands. This article presents their movement as a case study for the analysis of the struggles of the precarious youth in Tunisia. The Kerkennah movement is particularly interesting both for its representativeness and for its specificities. It is representative because of the social composition of its core participants (young people in precarious employment), its demands (secure employment and local development), and its main forms of collective action (the roadblock and the riot). This allows for some insight into similar contemporary episodes of social unrest across the country, like the protests that have more recently blocked some gas and oil extraction sites in the southern regions of Tataouine and Kebili. It is specific because it was relatively durable, which helps to identify some of the conditions for protracted mobilisation of youth living in precarious circumstances. It will be argued that deeply entrenched communal solidarities were an important ingredient for the sustainability of the movement.

The first section of the article briefly reviews the recent literature on post-Arab Spring workers' mobilisations in North Africa and builds a theoretical framework to interpret the case under study. Against this background, the second section presents a historical account of the composition and struggles of the Tunisian working class, while the third section provides a narrative and an interpretation of the Kerkennah movement up to September 2016. The article is based on country-level empirical PhD research on Tunisian workers' mobilisations, including 53 semi-structured interviews and an extensive digitised document archive, and additional collection of materials specific to Kerkennah. These include semi-structured interviews with 13 interviewees conducted during two fieldwork visits to the islands, online archival research on press articles, a collection of relevant statements and agreements, and socioeconomic statistics.

Work in a world of robots: Understanding precarity and unwaged labour

With the debate on the different trajectories of the Arab Spring protests, there has been a revival of interest in workers' mobilisations in North Africa, with monographs showing how the balance of class power was an important ingredient in the outcomes of the uprisings (Alexander and Bassiouny 2014; Beinin 2016; Yousfi 2015). These authors are well aware of the problems arising from precarity, but their main focus is on waged workers organised in trade unions. Some academic work putting precarious workers at the centre of analysis has also emerged (Ayeb and Bush 2012; Bayat 2015; Bono et al. 2015). The current article is, however, innovative in three ways: it deploys a 'heretical' Marxist framework broadening the concept of working class to include all precarious workers; in this light it provides a historical narrative of class struggles in Tunisia comparing the current cycle to the one that took place in the 1970s and early 1980s; and it presents new empirical material on the Kerkennah movement.

The origins of the precarity concept do not lie far from Tunisia, as they are to be found in Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of work and workers in pre-Independence Algeria (Bourdieu et al. 1963). Disturbingly, the arbitrariness and anxiety endured by many precarious workers in today's Tunisia are in several respects a *déjà vu* of Bourdieu's 'sellers of nothing for nothing'¹ (Bourdieu et al. 1963, 298) who crowded the Algerian streets in an attempt to raise an income in the absence of more stable alternatives. However, the account that follows shows that there are also important differences. Remarkably – while in Bourdieu's time a degree guaranteed a way out of precarity by virtue of its rarity (Bourdieu et al. 1963, 272) – the unemployed graduates are now a salient element of North African labour markets and politics.

The issue of precarity was revitalised in the early 2000s by the global justice movement – especially in Mediterranean Europe – and by its associated intellectuals, who rooted their understanding of it in the decline of the Fordist system of standardised manufacturing and secure employment and in the rise of immaterial labour, in which workers perform tasks characterised by a centrality of knowledge, information, affect, and communication (see, for example, Hardt and Negri 2004).² However, immaterial labour cannot be seen as

hegemonic in many contemporary global South struggles (Federici 2008). In Tunisia, while educational levels have risen over time, opportunities for qualified employment have not increased at the same rate, and thus the influence of immaterial labour is limited and cannot provide the main infrastructure for mobilisation.

In English-speaking academia, the best-known use of the precarity concept is Guy Standing's successful book *The precariat* (2011). While using the term, Standing detached it from the militant milieus from which it had re-emerged. His interpretation is especially problematic in considering those in precarious employment as a separate class, outside the working class. But, as Erik Olin Wright (2016) has shown, precarious and secure workers are best seen as part of the same class because of the overall convergence of their interests vis-à-vis the economic elite.

This article stands on two main theoretical axes. Aaron Benanav's work on the expansion of the 'surplus population' since the post-World War II period is adopted to make sense of precarity, while the autonomist tradition of class composition analysis is used to understand unwaged labour. These approaches share several fundamental assumptions, but tensions exist between them, forcing careful use of their concepts.

The US-based Marxist scholar Aaron Benanav explains the global rise of precarity as the result of an increase in the supply of labour due to rapid demographic growth and the global fall of subsistence agriculture in recent decades, combined with a decline in the demand for labour due to slow economic growth accompanied by automation of production (Benanav 2015a; Benanav 2015b). An effect of automation was the secular decline in the global share of agricultural employment. Until the 1970s, the losses of agricultural employment were at least partially offset by the increase in industrial jobs. But industry is also subject to high levels of automation, which contributes to explaining why in recent decades the global share of workers employed in industry has in fact not grown. Contrary to widespread perceptions, the share of industrial employment has declined or stagnated also in most of the global South, and China seems to be no exception (Chuang 2016). The tertiary sector (i.e. the service sector) thus has to bear all the employment burden of workers evacuated from agriculture and industry. But most

services have turned out not to be amenable to quick productivity gains and therefore cannot deliver the high GDP growth rates that would be needed for employment losses to be temporarily recuperated.

These trends have far-reaching consequences. In many global South countries that have never reached levels of industrialisation comparable to the West, workers are being thrown directly from agricultural employment into the tertiary sector. For the vast majority of them, this does not mean a highly paid job in finance or creative work in the media industry, but insecure toil in low-end services, often informal and/or self-employed. Therefore, there is no universal and linear three-stage model of development, in which all countries necessarily and gradually move from being centred on agriculture to industry and finally to services. In a world market saturated with cheap industrial goods, very late industrialisers within the system of global capitalism may well turn out not to be industrialisers at all, in the sense that they may never reach the share of industrial employment that obtained in Western countries at its peak.

In exactly the same way that automation augments the productivity of those workers who remain in core production, it makes an increasing proportion of workers relatively less necessary to it. This is the surplus population, living under precarious employment and therefore with irregular access to income. In countries where there are no unemployment subsidies adequate to make a living, the surplus population still has to work in order to gain access to the means of mere survival. ‘Unemployment’ is often a cultural construct signifying that somebody is not engaged in the kind of work to which she feels entitled by prevailing social norms resulting from previous struggles. The category ‘unemployed’ is therefore misleading here, since we are mostly dealing with people actually performing casual work with widely varying hours of work.³ The label ‘precarious workers’ will thus be preferred to designate most members of the surplus population. Precarious workers pose latent or active pressures on the relatively secure workers, eroding their bargaining power and thus blurring the sociological frontier between precarious and secure workforce. Precarity spreads across sectors and subjects, undermining or weakening the forms of consciousness and organisation that characterised the age of expanding industrial employment.

Precarisation, informalisation, and the expansion of the service sector (or tertiarisation) are mutually reinforcing phenomena but they should not be confused. Precarity refers to insecure employment incapable of providing a regular income; it thus exists in both the informal and the formal sectors and in agriculture and industry as well as in the service sector. Of course, rising precarity is not a deterministic ‘law’ any more than rising automation. Indeed, in the post-World War II period many countries – including Tunisia – saw the advent of a social pact providing sources of regular income for some sections of the population. This period, however, can be regarded as exceptional in the history of capitalism and dependent on a series of specific conditions. Since the 1970s, the social pact has continuously deteriorated and no inversion of the tendency is in sight.

But who are the subjects of precarity? At this point the autonomist tradition comes in (for English-language accounts, see Dyer-Witherford 1999, and Wright 2002). In the 1960s, the Italian ‘pre-autonomists’ (known as *operaisti* or workerists) shifted the focus of analysis from capital to class, from the structures of capital’s ‘objective laws’ to the agency of subjective class struggles. They thus concentrated on the study of historically specific class composition. The precarious are part of the class composition because they are forced to sell – directly or indirectly – their labour power to capital, even if there is nobody to buy it enduringly. Class is defined here by dispossession, not by exploitation. However, there is an array of ways through which capital can extract value from the work of segments of the surplus population even bypassing the wage relation (see van der Linden 2014). Autonomist feminists held that housewives are also exploited by capital because they perform unpaid work producing and reproducing that peculiar commodity that is labour power (Dalla Costa and James 1972). Their insights were later applied to unwaged peasants in the global South (Cleaver 1976) and to ‘self-employed’ workers in the North (Bologna and Fumagalli 1997). Moreover, the autonomist feminist understanding of the realm of social reproduction as integrated within the circuit of capital accumulation opened the way to seeing the sites of social reproduction, the community, as sites of class struggles (see Haider and Mohandesi 2015).

Manifold examples of exploitation outside the wage relation can be found in the Tunisian society. For instance, the many Tunisian ‘unemployed’ graduates who provide informal

private tutoring participate in the production of the labour power of their pupils just as housewives participate in the production of the labour power of their children. In Kerkennah, most male unemployed graduates actually work as fishers just like many other men in the islands. Self-employed fishers sell their product to wholesale and food-processing companies who appropriate part of the value they produce. These types of ‘dependent self-employed’ workers are better viewed in the way that Marx saw smallholding peasants in the 19th century: ‘The smallholding of the peasant is only a means for capitalists to draw profit, interest, and rent from the soil, leaving to the farmer himself how to extract his wages’ (Marx 1852, 120). The unwaged are also exploited by financial capital; in fact, many of them have to go into debt in order to gain access to the meagre means of production they use (see Lazzarato 2011).

By placing the roots of the plight of the Tunisian precarious youth within the global dynamics of capitalist development and by explaining how these social subjects are indeed part of a broadly conceived working class, this theoretical framework allows us to understand the mobilisations of the precarious for socioeconomic rights as class struggle, and to see how the intersection of communal and class solidarities can in some contexts acquire a prominent role relative to ostensibly more ‘traditional’ forms of workers’ mobilisation.

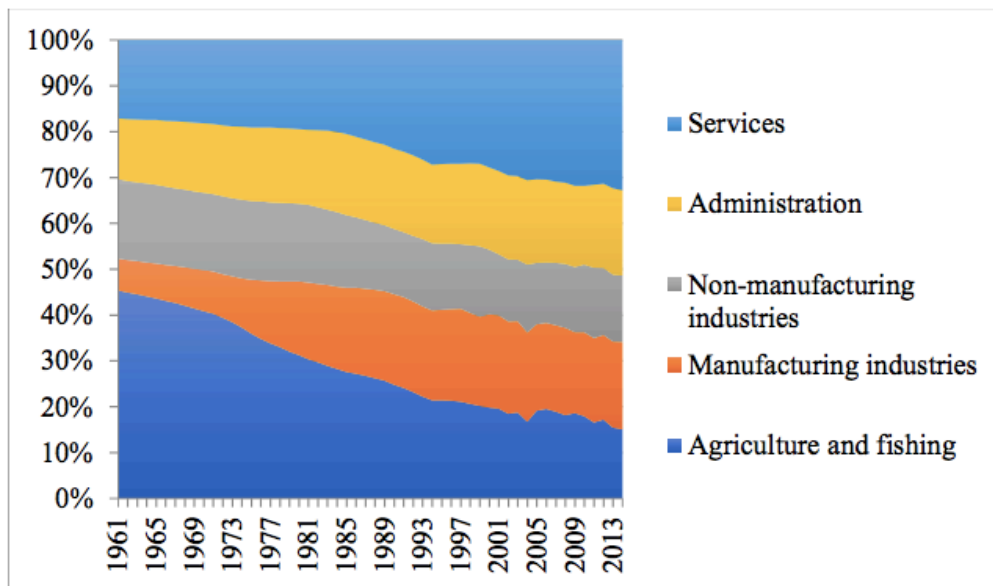
Tunisian class composition: A historical analysis

Tunisian sectoral employment trends are in line with the global tendencies described above. Between 1961 and 2014, agricultural employment fell from 45% to 15% of total employment, and service sector employment rose from 30% to 51% of total employment. Industrial employment (including construction, mining, energy and water) started at 24% and kept growing until 1981, after which it remained at 33–34%. The growth of industrial employment was entirely due to the growth of employment in manufacturing, which rose from 7% in 1961 to 19% in the mid 1980s. After that it stayed between 18% and 20%.⁴

These data also show that in Tunisia manufacturing in part compensated for the secular

decline in agricultural employment up to the 1970s. Since the 1980s, the burden of absorbing the workers expelled from the land fell entirely on the shoulders of the service sector. Employment in manufacturing remained at the same level quantitatively but changed qualitatively. Relatively secure employment in the state-owned enterprises (SOEs) declined, and precarious employment in private-sector light manufacturing for export increased.

Figure 1 – Total employment by economic sector (Tunisia, 1961-2014)



Calculated by the author based on Ben Chaabane 2014.

Employment in the public administration⁵ grew from 13% of total employment in 1961 to 17–18% in the mid 1980s, after which it remained at the same level until the Uprising. The burden of expanding employment opportunities therefore fell entirely on the shoulders of the private service sector. To a much larger extent than in Western countries, most new employment in services has little to do with qualified cognitive and creative work and means a wide and fragmented array of deskilled jobs in highly precarious conditions that provide very limited income. The informal economy is estimated to employ 32% of the Tunisian employed population, and 57% of those working in the informal economy are unwaged (Ben Cheikh 2016).

Kerkennah in part distinguishes itself from the national picture because a large proportion

of the employed, 42%, works in 'agriculture and fishing' (INS 2016a). This is due to the dominance of fishing in the local economy. Despite Petrofac's presence, industrial employment on the islands, at 15%, is less than half of the national figure. In fact, production on the extractive field is highly technological and requires very few workers, only about 80 according to the local union.⁶ There are also 55 security workers hired through a local agency.

The Tunisian workforce also follows the global tendencies towards rising levels of education and increasing female participation in official employment. For instance, the number of Tunisian university graduates grew from a mere 564 after Independence in 1956 (Ben Romdhane 2011, 150) to 1,116,000 in 2012 (INS 2013). But the expansion of higher education was not matched by an expansion of employment for those with educational qualifications. Even according to official statistics, between 1994 and the present the unemployment rate for university graduates jumped from 4% (INS 1995) to 32% (INS 2016b). Almost in line with the national figure of 21%, university graduates in Kerkennah make up 19.5% of the employed population (INS 2016a). Unemployed graduate numbers in Kerkennah were estimated at around 500 in 2011, and have now increased to around 700. It should be remembered, however, that someone is socially considered an unemployed graduate even if she is working, as long as the conditions that characterise her job fall below what is normally held to be the appropriate minimum for the level of education she has attained.

Women moved from 6% of Tunisia's official economically active population in 1966 (INS 1966) to 29% in 2016 (INS 2016b). As everywhere, women in Tunisia face gendered oppression at work and in the broader society. In addition to housework, women are over-proportionally represented in some of the most vulnerable manual sectors of the economy: in 2012, for instance, women constituted 72% of employment in the textile sector (INS 2013). Women also often endure routine violations of basic labour legislation, particularly in the area of light manufacturing for export. In Kerkennah, women are 21.5% of the official economically active population, although this figure hides unpaid housework, small subsistence farming and activities auxiliary to fishing, like the production or maintenance of fishing nets.

The Tunisian workforce is also stratified along ethnic lines. Immigration from abroad is a relatively small phenomenon, but internal migrations have been historically significant, mostly from the interior to the coastal regions like Greater Tunis, the Sahel and Sfax, where many migrants are employed in light manufacturing and tourism (see Touhami 2012). Tunisia too has its racist name – ‘*jabri*’ – to stigmatise migrants from the marginalised regions. This epithet, much like its Italian equivalent ‘*terrone*’, associates geographical origin to negative connotations of peasantry, ignorance, and impoliteness. Kerkennah is also characterised by high emigration rates, but immigrants from the interior regions of Tunisia are present on the islands, especially in construction.

These macro-level changes in the Tunisian workforce were not a natural and conflict-free evolution from agricultural to service employment. In the 1960s, under the ‘socialist’ government led by Ahmed Ben Salah, Tunisia engaged in a programme of import-substitution industrialisation with the creation of several heavy-industry SOEs, while the traditional agricultural sector was modernised through a system of state-run ‘cooperatives’. In 1970, the regime switched towards liberal economic policy, striving to expand the private sector, attract foreign investment and produce for export. But the state maintained a strong role as asset owner and leader of investment.

The 1970s witnessed a major global cycle of struggles and Tunisia was no exception. We can conventionally place the beginning of this broad cycle from the start of the strike wave in 1971 to the repression of the main trade union (the *Union générale tunisienne du travail*, UGTT, or General Workers’ Union of Tunisia) in 1985. While precarious workers also mobilised, the protagonists of this cycle were a new generation of educated workers and the young elements of the waged middle class that radicalised leftwards in the student movement and then entered the workforce and the UGTT at the same time (see Hamzaoui 1984). These workers, supported by the UGTT left, and in many cases against the UGTT National Executive Committee, took the lead in the strike wave that peaked in 1977. The strikes subsided in 1978–80 due to the harsh repression that followed the general strike of 26 January 1978, but they picked up again in the early 1980s. The strongholds of industrial militancy were SOEs like Bizerte’s ironworks El Fouladh, Sousse’s automobile factory STIA, Gabes’s chemical complex CM (Zeghidi

1997). Strikes in transport were also very common. The core demands revolved around the wage, and indeed real wages grew quickly, surpassing the rate of GDP growth (see Ben Romdhane 2011).

The regime first made generous material concessions, but rising debt and the lack of hard currency pushed the government to prepare the way for a typical structural adjustment programme under the supervision of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. In 1985, the authorities commenced increasingly heavy repression of the UGTT, involving attacks by unofficial militias on the union premises. Many militant rank-and-file trade unionists were laid off and senior UGTT leaders were jailed.

It should be made clear that precarity was always a problem for the majority of Tunisian workers. However, this was to an extent alleviated under the ‘populist social pact’ built in the years following Independence in 1956. The expansion of the public sector and of industry, high growth rates, the rapid growth of a relatively generous welfare system and a protective legislative framework shielded a growing number of the population from the vagaries of the labour market and engendered widespread expectations that things would continue to improve. But the last decades saw an inversion or a weakening of all these tendencies (see Ben Romdhane 2011). What is new is not the existence of precarity but the weakening of the post-Independence trend towards increasing employment protections for broadening segments of the workforce. The memory of the former social pact deepens people’s frustrations and widens the gap between expectations and daily realities.

Following a common pattern, the former strongholds of labour militancy were restructured, privatised, or abandoned to a slow decline. Between 1987 and 2010, 219 SOEs were privatised (ITCEQ 2010). Total public employment (the public administration plus the SOEs) declined from 41% of wage-earners in 1980 (Zouari 1989, 339) to no more than 32% of wage-earners in 2010 (IMF 2014). While many SOEs survived, they needed fewer workers either because new machinery was introduced or because the lack of automation, coupled with free-trade agreements, made them less competitive, forcing them to cut production. The workplace unions in many SOEs became a shadow of

themselves and often participated in a widespread system of corrupt practices, especially in recruitment. In fact, employment in the public sector is seen in Tunisia as the way to economic security and upward social mobility, but in times of weak investment and fiscal crisis of the state this is an extremely oversubscribed hub of the labour market. A leftist militant from Kasserine who was interviewed is quite representative of public perceptions in his remarks on trade unionism in two major SOEs:

It's a shame, the cellulose factory is screwed for good. Before 2005 we used to have some very good militants there, it has a good history. [...] The cellulose and the CPG [phosphates mining SOE], they're the same. It's the corruption in hiring, in finance, in management, in production ... (Interview, Kasserine, 6 November 2015⁷)

The protagonists of the latest major cycle of struggles, which we can place in time from the beginning of the Gafsa Revolt for employment in January 2008 to the present day, were not relatively secure waged workers. State employees and manufacturing workers participated in the regional general strikes called by the UGTT at the height of the 2011 Uprising and contributed to a new surge of strikes after Ben Ali's downfall. However, the regional strikes were called as a result of pressure coming not from the factory shop floor, but from the streets outside.

Since the Gafsa Revolt, the most prominent presence on the streets was that of precarious youth. While they were often backed by the UGTT left (whose power survived especially in the public administration), their very work conditions made it impossible for them to be union members and to use strikes as a weapon. The majority of them do not belong to any stable, formal organisation. While broadly left-wing ideas and sensibilities prevailed in the 1970s, the Tunisian left today has to compete with a strong Islamist movement, and both face very widespread 'anti-politics' feelings among the population. A stable left-wing ideological and organisational presence among the precarious youth is ensured by the *Union des diplômés chômeurs* (UDC, or Union of Unemployed Graduates). But this organisation mostly represents unemployed graduates, who are only a fraction of the precarious.

Roadblocks and riots are the precarious workers' main tools for seeking concessions.

Less sensational than riots, roadblocks can produce greater economic damage and have the advantages of being more sustainable in time and of involving less risk of harm to the participants and to others. Because they halt the production of value from outside the workplace, roadblocks are effectively the strike of the workless. The latter can exploit logistical weak spots to clog the circulation of strategic commodities and as a consequence to slow down or stop production. But, unlike strikes, roadblocks are illegal, and therefore their practicability depends directly on the balance of power between protesters and law enforcement.

These mobilisations are strongly impregnated with the protesters' work ethic⁸ and their core demands revolve around secure employment and local development. Secure employment is often presented as a condition for dignity, and one of the most famous slogans of the 2011 Uprising was '*Ettashghil istehqaq, ya issabat essoraq!*' ('Employment is a right, you gang of thieves!'). However, one should not necessarily take this demand at face value – after all, what people primarily need is obviously the regular income coming from secure employment, and many protesters have been happy to accept public sector jobs in which they were reportedly not given much to do.

The famous case of Mohamed Bouazizi, whose self-immolation was the trigger of the 2011 Uprising, is extremely symbolic of the trends that have just been outlined. The young man was an agricultural labourer but he lost his job after the land where he worked was sold and production there restructured (Fautras 2015). The day that Bouazizi set himself ablaze, he had been harassed by the police while illegally selling vegetables on the street. Bouazizi's trajectory can thus be read as an illustration of the general trend described above, in which losses in agricultural employment are not compensated by new jobs elsewhere, forcing many young people into desperately precarious work particularly in the low end of the service sector. In order to survive, the precarious have then to recur to individual 'hustling' or collective mobilisation. In January 2011, the latter met a rigidly crystallised authoritarian state-form, and brought it down due to the fact that the precarious were joined by other sectors of the population, including many secure workers and members of the middle class. But the Uprising could not invert the global trend towards precarisation.

No gas without secure employment and local development: The Kerkennah movement against Petrofac

Arriving in Kerkennah from the mainland port of Sfax, the visitor cannot fail to notice the very basic state of the infrastructure, with the exception of the main road connecting the south-western port of Sidi Youssef to the north-eastern village of Alataya. That is the road used by the Petrofac trucks to transport the gas condensate out of the islands. The resident population is only about 15,500 inhabitants (INS 2016a), scattered among 13 villages (the largest of these being Mellita, Alataya, and the capital Remla). According to the official statistics, the number of those in the islands in employment in 2014 was only 4,373, but this conceals much informal work in and outside the household. The average age of 37 is five years higher than the national average. This is due to high emigration rates to the Tunisian mainland and to Europe. The Italian island of Lampedusa is only 150 km away and many young Kerkennians have tried their luck on the dangerous trip.

Figure 2 – Tunisia and the Kerkennah Islands



Source: Sandro Montagner, Comunicazione Sostenibile.

There are two main energy companies operating in Kerkennah, Thyna Petroleum Services (TPS) and Petrofac. TPS is an oil joint venture between the Tunisian state-owned *Entreprise Tunisienne d'Activités Pétrolières* (ETAP, the Tunisian Enterprise for Petroleum Activities) and the Austrian multinational OMV; its first site in Kerkennah has been active since 1985 (ETAP n.d.). Petrofac, on the other hand, is a Jersey-registered corporation, with revenue of US\$6,844 million reported in 2015 (Petrofac 2015). Petrofac is currently under investigation by the UK Serious Fraud Office for suspected bribery, corruption, and money laundering in a number of countries (SFO 2017). The corporation entered Tunisia in 2007 and started extracting gas in Kerkennah's Chergui field in 2008. Chergui's productive capacity is 850,000 normal cubic metres per day and 55% of the field's revenues are devolved to ETAP.

The relative poverty of the islands compared to the mass of wealth extracted by the rich foreign multinationals generates strong feelings of injustice among the population. Complaints that the vast majority of Kerkennians have never benefited from TPS and Petrofac's presence are often heard. Based on the conversations and the interviews carried out during fieldwork, it seems clear that most inhabitants think that TPS and Petrofac should return some of their profits to the islands by contributing to local employment and development, particularly in view of the fact that extractive activities pollute the environment and damage fishing and tourism. Many also resent Petrofac's opaque recruitment practices, especially during Ben Ali's time. These were allegedly based on a patron-client network involving the ruling party and the local authorities.

It is possible to identify four main social groups in relation to the Kerkennah movement: unemployed graduates, fishers, public administration employees, and Petrofac workers (direct and indirect). The unemployed graduates were the most prominent group mobilising against Petrofac. As the Tunisian private sector offers few jobs for people with educational qualifications relative to the supply of graduates, most unemployed graduates seek employment in the public sector. Both women and men participated, and the former were a majority of the 266 participants in the Petrofac-funded employment scheme (see below).

The organisation aiming to represent unemployed graduates is the UDC: its national leadership is leftist, but membership is open to all unemployed people. The spokesperson for UDC Kerkennah, Ahmed Souissi, is also a long-time left-wing activist. The 266 participants in the employment scheme were all UDC members, but included all political tendencies, along with those completely disaffected with politics. Indeed, divisive political ideology and party membership tended to be strongly played down in favour of consensual local solidarity, especially given the attempts of some media and of the Prime Minister Habib Essid himself to underline the role of the leftist *Front populaire* and the Islamist *Hizb Ut-Tahrir*. The two parties have a presence on the islands and – unlike the governmental modernist and Islamist parties – they did support the Kerkennah movement from opposite sides, but unsurprisingly their members are small minorities. During the height of the mobilisations, the movement organised through village-level assemblies and delegates, and a general assembly in Remla. Social media were widely used for organisational and communicational purposes.

Virtually all men on the islands are able to fish and do it more or less regularly depending on the extent to which they depend on it for their income. Fishers either own their boats or they share the product of their work with the owners of the boats they use. The ‘boatless’ fishers are paid in cash by the boat owner for a quota of the product. The boat owner then sells the fish to local wholesalers, who sell it in turn to retail markets (normally in Sfax), food-processing factories, or restaurants. Small-scale fishing is a hard, dangerous, and insecure source of income. Just like the unemployed graduates, the fishers are not unified by the condition of being waged employees working in large groups under the same employers. But this lack of occupational cohesion is compensated within each category and between them by strong communal ties, as many unemployed graduates also fish, and all have fishers in their families.

The fishers do not benefit from TPS and Petrofac’s presence on the archipelago and TPS’s occasional oil spills are very detrimental to the fishers’ work. Most of them vehemently agree that the energy firms should contribute to the development of the islands. They have often participated in the mobilisations, even if their role and the emphasis they placed on local development have been somewhat obscured by the

attention attracted by the unemployed graduates and their demand for employment. Mellita has a fishers' union affiliated to the UGTT, but most fishers tend to organise on an informal basis.

Public administration employees are the other large occupational group, and make up 23% of the employed of Kerkennah (INS 2016a). They are the backbone of the UGTT. Despite an economy based on small-scale fishing, trade unionism has had an important role in the history of the islands. In fact, the main founders of the UGTT, Farhat Hached and Habib Achour, were Kerkennians who had migrated to the mainland, and up to the present day several UGTT national leaders have Kerkennian origins and maintain their ties to the islands.

While public administration employees are certainly better off than the fishers and the unemployed graduates, they are linked to them by family and community ties and they do not benefit from Petrofac's presence either. They mostly agree that the corporations should contribute to local employment and development. But the local UGTT, as is often said, was 'between a rock and a hard place' because it had to defend the interests of those of its members who depended on Petrofac for their work and at the same time had to respond to the opposite pressures from its base in the public administration and from the general population. The local UGTT had thus to mediate between the Petrofac workers and the precarious. Its position was that Petrofac should continue operating in Kerkennah and that illegal and violent methods should not be used by either side. However, it backed the demands of the movement against Petrofac by releasing official statements, participating in the negotiations, providing meeting places, and calling the 12 April 2016 local general strike against repression (see below). Some among the interviewed accuse the UGTT of having made too many compromises with Petrofac in order to defend its members employed by the multinational, or of having prioritised employment in the public sector over the development of the archipelago (Interviews, Mellita, 20 November 2016, and Mellita, 9 April 2017). The interviewed UGTT officials counter that the general strike and the pro-local development clauses of the agreements that were signed disprove these accusations (Interviews, Remla, 23 November 2016, Sfax, 25 November 2016 and Remla, 10 April 2017).

The Petrofac employees and the security workers depend on the corporation's presence on the islands for their employment, as it offers better wages and conditions than they could get elsewhere. Petrofac also has a convention with Kerkennah's Grand Hotel that helps to keep it afloat during the low season, since Kerkennah is not a famous tourist destination. There is a UGTT union in all three workplaces. These workers faced strong contradictory pressures from Petrofac's threats to leave Kerkennah on the one hand and their own grievances against Petrofac and their feelings of solidarity towards their fellow islanders on the other. A Petrofac trade unionist who was interviewed declared:

There were a lot of Petrofac employees who were against the protesters and supported aggression against them. But we, the UGTT, we were against all aggression, it's our family after all. (Interview, Sfax, 25 November 2016)

The UGTT workplace unions of the Petrofac employees, the security workers and the Grand Hotel joined the general strike of 12 April 2016. A security worker and trade unionist emphatically confirmed: 'We were first in line in the strike!' (Interview, Remla, 24 November 2016).

Petrofac had been targeted by sporadic protests since its early years in Kerkennah, but only with the 2011 Uprising was it really forced to take the grievances of the population seriously. Kerkennah joined the Uprising on 12 January 2011, when the regional general strike was called by the Regional Executive Committee of the Sfax UGTT. On 14 January 2011, clashes between the protesters and the police left one protester dead, the 26-year-old Slim Hadhri. After Ben Ali's departure, the local branch of the UDC was founded along with the *Comité local de protection de la révolution* (CLPR, the Local Committee for Protection of the Revolution). The CLPRs were participative local institutions that formed all over Tunisia after the retreat of the police, in order to protect the local communities and express their grievances.

In the following weeks, groups of protesters started to hold sit-ins outside the local government offices and at the Petrofac field, blocking the trucks transporting the gas to the port of Sidi Youssef. In the post-Uprising context of political instability and widespread social mobilisations, the authorities and Petrofac itself were willing to make

concessions in order to keep the situation under some control. On 20 May 2011, after a series of negotiations, the Kerkennah CLPR, the regional Sfax UGTT and Petrofac signed an agreement at the governorate of Sfax. Petrofac would provide 600,000 Tunisian dinars (TDNs) per year (€303,000 at the time) to boost employment and development on the islands, it would directly hire 15 new workers, and it would buy some equipment for Kerkennah's public administration.⁹ The agreement concluded by stating that other negotiations would follow to discuss a programme of local development for 2012, but the programme never really took off.

Following the accord, an employment scheme was put in place in which Petrofac disbursed the money to the governorate that then forwarded it to 248 unemployed graduates belonging to the UDC. Their number increased to 266 in 2012, 153 of them women (Interview, Remla, 19 November 2016). The unemployed graduates were allocated to different public administration agencies on the islands. The beneficiaries were chosen according to the following criteria: residence in Kerkennah, year of graduation, marital status, and level of the degree. The number of beneficiaries from each village was determined proportionally to the size of its population. The beneficiaries holding a university degree (215) received TDN450 per month (€227 at the time), while those holding a high school degree (51) received TDN300 per month (€152 at the time) (Mekki 2016). It was however clear that the authorities and Petrofac saw this as a temporary arrangement. The 266 had no contract, no payslips, and no social security contributions. Indeed, the regularisation of their employment situation in the public administration became their main unmet demand, generating periodic protests.

In March 2015, Petrofac declared its intention to stop funding the employment scheme. On 3 April 2015, Imed Derouich, Petrofac's CEO in Tunisia at the time, intervened on Radio Express FM (2015) arguing that the majority of the beneficiaries of the employment scheme did not really work in return for their wages (which would blur the distinction between 'wage' and 'unemployment subsidy'). The unemployed graduates set up a new roadblock, halting production on the site from 10 March 2015 to 16 April 2015, when a new agreement between the UDC, the UGTT and Petrofac was signed. Petrofac would keep funding the employment scheme until the end of 2015. In the meantime, the

governorate would establish an 'environmental firm' on the model of the employment schemes created after the Uprising in other marginalised regions. This public firm would regularly hire the 266 and keep them allocated to the various public administration agencies of the islands. But in January 2016 the authorities did not implement the agreement and thus the conflict turned into a deadlock.

On 19 January 2016, the unemployed graduates started a new roadblock outside the Petrofac field, halting production once again. Fresh negotiations began, but this time the authorities and Petrofac were not willing to back down. In the meantime, gangs of thugs unsuccessfully tried to harass and attack the protesters. An interviewed female activist mentioned that: 'Everybody [taking part in the movement] was harassed but there were attempts to insult and terrorise the women specifically, although they resisted well' (Interview, Remla, 22 November 2016). On 3 April 2016, the word spread that a large number of riot police were aboard the public transport ferry from Sfax to Kerkennah. For security reasons, the unemployed graduates decided to move the roadblock from the Petrofac field to the village of Mellita. During the night, at least 500 riot police attacked the roadblock with tear gas and two water cannons. According to my interviews and to some news reports, the police hardly discriminated between protesters and the general population, insulting and attacking anybody they found in their way. This massive display of force was taken as a provocation by many inhabitants, especially the fishers, who joined the fray even if they had not been part of the original roadblock. The Mellita roadblock reassembled soon after its dispersal, while the riot police maintained its presence on the islands and made four arrests. The *Ligue tunisienne des droits de l'homme* (LTDH, the Tunisian League for Human Rights) denounced several violations, including the torture in police custody of at least one of those arrested.¹⁰

This situation of stasis continued for several days, with no progress towards a resolution of the conflict, until 8 April 2016, when the UGTT declared a local general strike to be held on 12 April 2016 calling for the liberation of those arrested and resumption of the negotiations to satisfy the demands of the movement. The strike was successful, and many of the population and local businesses participated. As noted above, the strikers included the workplace unions of the Petrofac employees and security workers.

On 14 April 2016, a new round of negotiations took place in the Sfax governorate between the representatives of the local and regional UGTT, the governor, and the police. Mohamed Ali Arous, the Kerkennah local UGTT secretary general, obtained a deadline of 24 hours to propose an agreement to the protesters. However, the police did not respect the 24-hour 'truce' and on the same evening it forcibly let the Petrofac trucks through from the port of Sidi Youssef to the gas field. Who gave the order remains unknown up to today. Tension had mounted in the former ten days and it eventually exploded. Riots against the police broke out all over Kerkennah. On the same night, protesters at the mainland port of Sfax set up a block to prevent police reinforcements from leaving for the islands. On 15 April 2016, the clashes picked up again until the police were cornered in the port of Sidi Youssef without any escape route. The protesters organised to let the police get the boat back to Sfax without anybody getting seriously hurt. Four police vehicles were burnt and one was thrown into the sea.

After the April crisis, the situation returned to deadlock. The police were not allowed back on the islands, Petrofac remained closed even in the absence of a physical roadblock, and no negotiations took place. Despite media reports mainly presenting Kerkennah as a land of chaos and potential terrorist activity, there was no major disorder. On 2 June 2016, Tunisia's president, Beji Caid Essebsi, announced an initiative to dissolve the incumbent executive and form a 'national unity government', including representatives of the UGTT, to address the economic crisis of the country. It was therefore useless to negotiate under a government soon to expire.

On 20 August 2016, the national unity government was announced. The new minister of social affairs was Mohamed Trabelsi, formerly a UGTT leader from Sfax. When, in early September 2016, Petrofac announced again that it was leaving Kerkennah, Trabelsi brokered an agreement that was signed on 23 September 2016. The text of the new agreement listed larger concessions than the previous ones. The 50 unemployed with a high school degree would be hired in a newly created firm with a donated capital of TDN2.5 million (about €1 million at the time) that would then have to become financially self-sufficient. The remaining unemployed would be regularly hired in the local public administration in three tranches between 2017 and 2019. ETAP, Petrofac, and TPS would

provide TDN1.5 million per year (€607,000 at the time) to cover their wages. Additionally, the energy firms would disburse TDN3.5 million per year (about €1.4 million at the time) for local development projects, and a local committee would be created to decide on the allocation of these funds.¹¹ The agreement also listed the first projects that would be supported, including the construction of a new port in Sidi Youssef. All charges against the protesters would be dropped and the energy firms would be allowed to operate normally. In the following days, the police returned to Kerkennah and Petrofac resumed production after a blockade that had lasted eight months.

The agreement, if implemented – which is far from certain – will probably lead to better standards of living for the population of the archipelago. The situation remains very uncertain. Some of the first deadlines were not respected, which prompted a hard-line group of protesters not organised by the UDC to stage a new roadblock, which stopped Petrofac again from December 2016 to May 2017. On 24 May, just a few days before the beginning of Ramadan, Petrofac restarted production with army protection in place.

Arrests were made among the participants in the last block. The struggle over the distribution of the revenues coming from the islands' natural resources seems to be still unsettled.

This empirical account, with all its local specificities, is in several respects representative of the global trends described in the theoretical section of this article: the most productive sectors of the Kerkennian economy are highly capital intensive and require a very low number of workers, and a large part of the population lives off various kinds of precarious employment while being mostly excluded from the gains generated by high-tech production. Moreover, the facts are consistent with the autonomist feminist insight that the realm of social reproduction, the community, can become a site of struggle hindering the accumulation of capital. The people who took part in the mobilisations were relatively fragmented on an occupational level, with no large groups working for the same employers. However, despite the different interpretations of the events, the vast majority was at least temporarily united in an oppositional stance towards Petrofac and against the intervention of the riot police. What compensated for occupational

fragmentation was the communal solidarity of a small island population facing a wealthy foreign multinational that employed only a handful of local workers. Virtually all interviewees underlined their identity as Kerkennians first of all, and emphasised their commitment to the well-being of the islands, noting that ‘everyone knows each other’ and everybody is linked by family and community relations. The pressures towards class decomposition generated by employment precarity and dispersion were more than counterbalanced by a recomposition centred on notions of community belonging. As UDC’s Ahmed Souissi said:

Being the inhabitants of an island, with the boats connecting us to the mainland only between 6 am and 6.30 pm and then we’re isolated from the rest of the world. ... This creates a kind of special mentality. We told the prefect and the governor never to consider the use of force, because it would turn the whole island upside down ... even if we were only about 150 people, far away from the villages, at the Petrofac field. Even those Kerkennians who were openly against us, like the Petrofac workers or some hotel owners, they will switch to our side in order to defend the island. (Interview, Remla, 21 November 2016)

Conclusion

The precarious youth and the demands for secure employment and local development are at the core of the Tunisian cycle of struggles that can be said to have started in 2008 with the Gafsa Revolt and that continues to the present day. As shown in the theoretical section, these mobilisations are rooted in the rise of the global surplus population. The Kerkennah movement against Petrofac is part of this broader cycle of struggles, and it revolves around the same core subjects and demands. Consistent with autonomist feminism, another frequent feature is the importance of communal solidarities in the struggles of the precarious youth across the marginal regions, as shown by village- and neighbourhood-based organisation at the high points of the mobilisations. But this importance is particularly marked in Kerkennah due to the relative isolation of the islands.

Communal solidarities compensate for the lack of occupational cohesion and for the

weakness of formal organisations (with the relative exception of the UGTT, which however is by definition unable to function as a stable organisation for the precarious youth). Communal solidarity is not incompatible with class solidarity. Indeed, Tunisia's geographically uneven path of development has led to a certain internal intersection of class and locality. In 2010–11, and to a lesser extent in January 2016, local struggles circulated across the country through a discourse of social justice and opposition to the political and economic elites.

Communal solidarity, however, is not unproblematic as a medium of class recomposition. While, in the 1970s, recomposition based on labour struggles in the workplace was more directly in line with progressive egalitarian aspirations, the current recomposition based on community ties is fragile and politically ambivalent, as it can swing in disparate directions depending on a host of contextual factors. Neither the left nor the Islamist right are likely to win the battle for cultural hegemony.

Now that the 2011 Uprising has at least achieved basic civil and political rights, the question of what organisational forms could put down roots in local communities to give some degree of continuity to the struggles of the precarious is timelier than ever. A difficulty specific to the region is, of course, the influence of the oil-rich Gulf countries that supply significant support to the efforts of the Islamist right to penetrate working class communities, exacerbating the sectarian dimensions into which social anger can be channelled. And yet, it was precisely in this region that some of the most courageous struggles for dignity and social justice of our time took place. The (hi)story that found a new beginning in 2008 is far from being concluded.

Notes

1. Translated from French by the author.
2. Immaterial labour refers to work that results in immaterial products: information, knowledges, ideas, relationships, affects. Typical examples of eminently immaterial labour are the creative industries or care work. The concept of

immaterial labour is central in the ‘neo-workerist’ strand of autonomism led by authors like Antonio Negri, Maurizio Lazzarato, and Paolo Virno. These authors claim that immaterial labour is the most vital form of labour to contemporary capitalism and that the immaterial aspect of work exercises hegemony over all other forms of work.

3. This is also why unemployment statistics for countries without unemployment subsidies are virtually useless for our purposes.
4. The following figures were calculated using the database created by Monji Ben Chaabane for his study *La rémunération des salariés, 1989-2014* (Ben Chaabane 2014).
5. The statistics presented here are for the *fonction publique*, which is a subset of the public sector, meaning employees of ministries, local administrations, schools, hospitals, police, army, etc. I have therefore used the term ‘public administration’ in this article, rather than ‘public sector’, as the latter also includes workers of state-owned enterprises (SOEs): many SOEs are industrial firms, and employment there is thus categorised as ‘industrial employment’ in the statistics that I have used.
6. There are also about 30 administrative employees in Sfax and 100 in Tunis, according to the same source.
7. This and other interviews in the text were conducted in French and translated by the author.
8. This is also confirmed by Ben Amor and Moussa’s (2015) research on the attitudes towards work and unemployment of the youth of Tunis’s working class banlieues.
9. Minutes of the meeting that took place in Sfax on 20 May 2011 between the representatives of the Kerkennah CLPR, the regional Sfax UGTT, and Petrofac.

10. LTDH statements of 7 April 2016 and 10 April 2016.
11. ‘I’elan mushtarak lil-mabadi hawl attanmia bi-jazira Kerkennah istinaf sharika Petrofac li-nashatiha al-eadi’ (‘Joint declaration on the principles for the development of the Kerkennah’).

Acknowledgements

This article is dedicated to Giulio Regeni – a PhD student kidnapped, tortured and assassinated while doing fieldwork on the Egyptian informal workers and their organisations – and to all the victims of human rights abuses in North Africa. The author adds his voice to the many demanding truth and justice. My gratitude goes to all the participants in the research, to Monji Ben Chaabane, Moncef Guebsi and Salah Hamzaoui for their precious help, to Lorenzo Cini, Jack Copley, Osman Hassan, Iain Pirie, Nicola Pratt and Diane Robert for their feedback.

References

- Alexander, Anne, and Mostafa Bassiouny. 2014. *Bread, Freedom, Social Justice: Workers and the Egyptian Revolution*. London: Zed Books.
- Ayeb, Habib, and Ray Bush (eds). 2012. *Marginality and Exclusion in Egypt*. London: Zed Books.
- Bayat, Asef. 2015. “Plebeians of the Arab Spring.” *Current Anthropology* 56 (11): 33–43.
- Beinin, Joel. 2016. *Workers and Thieves: Labor Movements and Popular Uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Ben Amor, Ridha, and Hayet Moussa. 2015. “La représentation du travail et sa place dans la vie des jeunes.” In *Les jeunes de Douar Hicher et d’Ettadhamen : Une enquête*

sociologique, edited by Olfa Lamloum and Mohamed Ali Ben Zina, 99–114. Tunis: Arabesques.

Ben Chaabane, Monji. 2014. *La rémunération des salariés, 1989–2014*. Tunis: Institut Tunisien de la Compétitivité et des Etudes Quantitatives (ITCEQ). Accessed January 15, 2017. <http://www.itceq.tn/upload/files/notes2014/remuneration-des-salaries-1989-2014.pdf>.

Benanav, Aaron S. 2015a. “A Global History of Unemployment: Surplus Populations in the World Economy, 1949–2010.” PhD Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles.

Benanav, Aaron S. 2015b. “Precarity Rising.” Viewpoint Magazine. June 15. Accessed June 2, 2017. <https://www.viewpointmag.com/2015/06/15/precarity-rising/>.

Ben Cheikh, Nidhal. 2016. “L’emploi informel en Tunisie sur la période 2005–2015.” In *Protection sociale et économie informelle en Tunisie : Défis de la transition à l’économie formelle*, edited by Jacques Charmes and Nidhal Ben Cheikh, 54–70. Accessed January 15, 2017. http://www.cres.tn/uploads/tx_wdbiblio/Secteur_informel_Tunisie.pdf.

Ben Romdhane, Mahmoud. 2011. *Tunisie. État, économie et société : ressources politiques, légitimation et régulations sociales*. Paris: Editions Publisud.

Bologna, Sergio, and Andrea Fumagalli. (eds.) 1997. *Il lavoro autonomo di seconda generazione*. Milano: Feltrinelli.

Bono, Irene, Béatrice Hibou, Hamza Meddeb, and Mohamed Tozy. 2015. *L’État d’injustice au Maghreb : Maroc et Tunisie*. Paris: Karthala.

Bourdieu, Pierre, Alain Darbel, Jean-Paul Rivet, and Claude Seibel. 1963. *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie*. Paris: Mouton & Co.

Chuang. 2016. “No Way Forward, No Way Back: China in the Era of Riots.” In *Chuang 1: Dead Generations*. Accessed January 15, 2017. <http://chuangcn.org/journal/one/no-way-forward-no-way-back>.

Cleaver, Harry. 1976. "Internationalisation of Capital and Mode of Production in Agriculture." *Economic and Political Weekly* XI (13).
<https://la.utexas.edu/users/hcleaver/CleaverModeOf Production.pdf>.

Dalla Costa, Mariarosa, and Selma James. 1972. *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*. Bristol: Falling Wall Press.

Dyer-Witherford, Nick. 1999. *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High Technology Capitalism*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.

ETAP (Entreprise tunisienne d'activités pétrolières). n.d. "Production : Liste des concessions." Accessed December 7, 2016. <http://www.etap.com.tn/index.php?id = 1160&fiche = 10>.

Fautras, Mathilde. 2015. "Injustices foncières, contestations et mobilisations collectives dans les espaces ruraux de Sidi Bouzid (Tunisie) : Aux racines de la « révolution » ?" *Justice Spatiale* 7. <http://www.jssj.org/article/injustices-foncieres-contestations-et-mobilisations-collectives-dans-les-espaces-ruraux-de-sidi-bouzig-tunisie-aux-racines-de-la-revolution/>.

Federici, Silvia. 2008. "Precarious Labour: A Feminist Viewpoint." Accessed September 5, 2017. <https://inthemiddleofthewhirlwind.wordpress.com/precarious-labor-a-feminist-viewpoint/>.

Haider, Asad, and Salar Mohandesi. 2015. "Making a Living." Viewpoint Magazine, 5.

Hamzaoui, Salah. 1984. "Quelques réflexions et hypothèses pour l'étude de la jeunesse ouvrière." *Cahier du CERES, Sociologie* 10: 257–65.

Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. 2004. *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of the Empire*. New York, NY: Penguin Press.

IMF (International Monetary Fund). 2014. "Tunisia." IMF Country Report No. 14/277, September. Washington, DC: IMF. Accessed January 15, 2017.
<https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2014/cr14277.pdf>.

INS. 1966. *Recensement général de la population et des logements du 3 Mai 1966*. Tunis: INS.

INS. 1995. *Recensement général de la population et de l'habitat 1994*. Tunis: INS.

INS. 2013. *Enquête nationale sur la population et l'emploi 2012*. Accessed January 15, 2017. http://www.ins.tn/sites/default/files/publication/pdf/emploi_2012-.pdf.

INS. 2016a. *Sfax. A travers le recensement général de la population et de l'habitat 2014*. Accessed January 15, 2017. http://www.ins.tn/sites/default/files/publication/pdf/15_SFAX.pdf.

INS. 2016b. “Note sur l'enquête nationale de l'emploi, T3 2016.” Accessed January 15, 2017. <http://www.ins.tn/sites/default/files/publication/pdf/chomage%20T3.pdf>.

ITCEQ (Institut Tunisien de Compétitivité et des Etudes Quantitatives). 2010. *Rapport sur la privatisation et le développement du secteur privé*. Accessed January 15, 2017. http://www.itceq.tn/upload/files/dernieres_publications/rapport-privatisation.pdf.

Lazzarato, Maurizio. 2012 (2011). *The Making of the Indebted Man: An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition*. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e).

Marx, Karl. 1996 (1852). “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte”. In *Marx: Later Political Writings*, edited by Terrell Carver, 31–127. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mekki, Thameur. 2016. Nawaat, April 19. Accessed January 15, 2017. <https://nawaat.org/portail/2016/04/19/reportage-a-kerkennah-les-raisons-de-la-colere/>.

Petrofac. 2015. *Focusing on Core Strengths: Annual Report and Accounts 2015*. London: Petrofac Services Ltd. Accessed January 15, 2017. <https://www.petrofac.com/media/2582/petrofac-annual-reports-and-accounts-2015.pdf>.

Radio Express FM. 2015. “Imed Derouiche : Petrofac pourrait fermer ses portes en Tunisie.” April 3. Accessed August 17, 2017. <http://www.radioexpressfm.com/lire/imed-derouiche-petrofac-pourrait-fermer-en-tunisie-3220>.

SFO (Serious Fraud Office). 2017, “SFO Confirms Investigation into Petrofac PLC.” Statement, May 12. London: SFO. Accessed August 17, 2017. <https://www.sfo.gov.uk/2017/05/12/sfo-confirms-investigation-petrofac-plc/>.

Standing, Guy. 2011. *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Touhami, Habib. 2012. “Migrations intérieures : Evolution, axe et effets démographiques.” Accessed January 15, 2017. http://www.leaders.com.tn/uploads/FCK_files/file/Migrations%20intérieures%20et%20impacts.pdf.

van der Linden, Marcel. 2014. “Who Is the Working Class? Wage Earners and Other Labourers.” In *Workers and Labour in a Globalized Capitalism: Contemporary Themes and Theoretical Issues*, edited by Maurizio Atzeni, 70–84. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wright, Steve. 2002. *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism*. London: Pluto Press.

Wright, Erik O. 2016. “Is the Precariat a Class?” *Global Labour Journal* 7 (2): 123–135.

Yousfi, Hèla. 2015. *L’UGTT, une passion tunisienne : Enquête sur les syndicalistes en révolution 2011–2014*. Sfax: Med Ali Edition.

Zeghidi, Salah. 1997. “L’UGTT : pôle central de la contestation sociale et politique.” In *Tunisie : mouvements sociaux et modernité*, edited by Mahmoud Ben Romdhane, 13–62. Paris: Editions Karthala.

Zouari, Abderrazak. 1989. “Collective Action and Governance Structure in Tunisia’s Labor Organization.” in *The New Institutional Economics and Development: Theory and Applications to Tunisia*, edited by Mustapha K. Nabli and Jeffrey B. Nugent, 323–351. Amsterdam: North Holland.