

**Great Expectations in Hard Times:**

**A Case Study of Street Vendors in Tunisia pre-17/12 and post 17/12**

**Written For: Islam and Liberty Network**

**Written by: Mondher Youssfi**

**Abstract:** A street vendor resisting the oppressive hand of the state Police under Ben Ali kindled the Tunisian Revolution. The forthcoming momentum was echoed in what came to be known as 'The Arab Spring', toppling several dictatorships by public dissidence and revolutionary mottoes. These overwhelming changes foreground the position, whether economic or social or otherwise, of street vendors in Tunisia. This paper studies this phenomenon in select marginalised regions from a multidisciplinary perspective. It is dissected across the timeline of its emergence in the last quarter of the twentieth century to its peak nowadays. The first section of this paper studies this issue before 17/12/2010 in Tunisia. The political environment of oppression and the economic climate of poverty pushed citizens to deliberately and desperately break laws. Besides, this phenomenon punctuated the vulnerability of certain social groups. The second section of the paper will focus on the ramifications of the phenomenon post 17-12-2020. It will elicit from the invaluable input of the onsite stakeholders sifting through the multifaceted process of street vending in terms of its potential causes, both immediate and distant, and the different authorities intervening in the attempts to regulate it. Besides, the political, geostrategic, economic and societal changes that Tunisia has undergone during the last decade shall be studied in terms of their impact on street vendors. The last section of the paper consists of a series of recommendations designed in an interactive and local plan of sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Street vendors, Centralisation, Dysfunctional Administration, Social Links, Local development.

## **I. Conceptual Prelude:**

### **1. Definitions of ‘Street Vendors’:**

According to the Indian Association for Street Vendors (AIASV), a street vendor is ‘a person who offers goods or services for sale to the public without a permanently built structure but using a temporary or mobile structure’<sup>1</sup>. These Indian criteria are comparable to the Tunisian context, irrespective of the large differences in the scope. Indeed, street vendors could be mobile or stationary on the pavements or other public spaces. Besides, they could also be wandering across locations with their products on push carts, lorries, or in cycles.

As for legal considerations, street vendors fall within ‘a category of informal economy beyond the legal and administrative control of the state’. These actors have diverse political, administrative, economical, and societal threats. Indeed, studying the conditions of street vendors and their status is a multi-faceted challenge that starts with a conceptual prelude to the issue in Tunisia. In terms of social stereotypes, street vending is perceived as an undesirable activity fraught with uncertainty for ‘criminals’ who endanger public spaces, pursued by the police, and working under dysfunctional structures.

Street vending often sell home-based manufactured products and agriculture products for daily use for their minimal quality and low prices. These goods are usually marketed to the urban and rural poorer customers. In the Tunisian context, there are overlapping jurisdictional mandates on the matter, creating a conflict of prerogatives surrounding the said activity. Thus, there are several, and often conflicting, components in this process. Indeed, the legal, political, economic, and social stakeholders are inextricably tied in the status quo. As such, this study needs to adopt a multi-disciplinary approach to the matter.

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<sup>1</sup> Bhowmik, S. K. 2005. “Street Vendors in Asia”, in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XL, Nos. 22-23, pp.2256-2264.

## 2. The context of the ‘Arab Spring’:

What came to be known as the ‘Arab Spring’ had started with the story of an oppressed street vendor in an under-developed region in Tunisia who had committed suicide by self-immolation after a confrontation with a local police officer. In effect, the following wave of radical changes in the Arab World turned into a clash between a street vendor and political, economic, social, legal, and administrative authorities and institutions. This paper shall tackle street vending in Tunisia in this multi-disciplinary approach to cover all its aspects.

Otherwise, a decidedly economic analysis springing shall yield reductive conclusions.

Indeed, such a vulnerable category of people shall be one of the most affected groups, both economically and socially, by these changes at all levels. Tracing the links between the predominant institutions and the practices of street vending in the status quo is of great moment from the perspective of freedoms in the societal climate of protests.

On the whole, prior to the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 2010, Tunisia was an “unlikely seat of ferment, with a good educational system, strong middle class, and strong labour movement. Yet free expression and political parties were tightly restricted in favour of representing the country as an attractive tourist destination, and the president’s family dominated many commercial sectors.”<sup>2</sup> One major such sector was trafficking goods for daily consumption, mainly food items and house accessories, across the Libyan and Algerian borders. This is the initial step in a process that culminates in street vendors placed in regular ‘markets’ affordable to customers from the lower, middle and working classes due to their increasingly limited purchase abilities. and meant to promulgate these items with the gains shared unevenly between the vendors themselves and the multiple parties involved in the smuggling process, which, as discussed earlier, consists the logistical foundation of street vending.

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<sup>2</sup> Anderson, L (2011), “Demystifying the Arab Spring: parsing the differences between Tunisia, Egypt and Libya”, *Foreign Affairs* Vol 90, No 3, pages 2–7.

## **II. Street Vending before El-Bouazizi: The Roots of the Dilemma**

Street vending is by no means a novel phenomenon in Tunisia. Prior to the figure of Al-Bouazizi, there were many other street vendors who resorted to self-immolation in protest of harassment by the authoritarian regime's law enforcement agents. Those who could not have access to state jobs or have their own projects could only resort to being street vendors in the growing cities of the time, especially with limited educational or professional qualifications for the society and the slow economic growth for the society altogether. Studying the circumstances of these individuals, even if done briefly, should pave the way for a proper analysis of the phenomenon in its current complicated state of affairs.

### **1. Political Oppression:**

After its independence in 1956, Tunisian regimes tried to establish an independent modern state with focus on administration and education. However, the problem of despotism under Bourguiba, and later under Ben Ali, had dire societal implications. Corruption was so rampant that the sovereignty of laws was at stake. It follows that the confrontations with the police and customs officers were quite common over ambiguous laws. The rising state was struggling with a demographic growth coupled with a slow economy. Consequently, it chose to ignore, and at times cooperate with, individual smugglers who, like street vendors, evade paying taxes to maximise their net income. This implicit bargain was in exchange of the state relinquishing development of poorer border areas, whose inhabitants are largely left to their own resources to devise a story of personal salvation, irrespective of the rule of law and the social responsibility of the welfare state and the businesses active in the area. Indeed, such figures have become a staple of popular folklore in the impoverished population as a token of striving to make ends meet on a daily basis without a guaranteed sense of future destination.

## **2. Economic Dysfunction:**

The above discussed despotism had direct economic repercussions as the rates of poverty and unemployment were high in Tunisia throughout the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> This lack of development bespeaks a flawed approach to economic planning, predicated upon the reliance on tourism and on exporting raw agricultural and industrial materials exportation. This is a structural problem because its impact of creating and spreading wealth is minimal. It follows that investing in extending the logistic infrastructure was not a priority for the authorities. Instead, a profiteering business class gradually transformed the system into a platform for a quick lucrative process. Conversely, the most common economic activities of the state entail minimal technological prerequisites and cheap and unskilled labour force. An aftermath of this was a severe regional discrepancy of development rates due to a preferential treatment of coastal regions as they are more adaptable to the establishment of factories and touristic institutions. This is conducive to a concentration of administrations, population, and wealth in coastal areas at the expense of the disenfranchised Eastern Tunisia. This is relevant to street vending as the more poverty there is in a given area, the more likely it is to have a wider spread of street vendors as a main source of income, in the absence of a structured network of wealth making and creation such as factories or touristic destinations. Eventually, the absence of formal job opportunities forces these individuals to become street vendors.

## **3. Societal Implications:**

The Tunisian social class structure has undergone major changes that led to several forms of marginalisation for the under-privileged inhabitants. Indeed, the previously mentioned imbalanced development metrics push desperate young individuals and families from the inner to the coastal regions. This movement affected the demographic distribution of the

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<sup>3</sup> Brisson, Z., and K. Krontiris (2012). *Tunisia from Revolutions to Institutions*. Washington, DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/World Bank.

population as the poorer, and now largely deserted, areas would only get more underdeveloped as they are denied of their skilled and unskilled workforce alike. On the other hand, the destinations of this movement in the coastal cities would have a more developed economic infrastructure, and thus better working opportunities, both for university graduates and unskilled workers. However, these cities include a 'concentration' of migrants who would resort to informal economic activities such as street vending to make a living as a good part of street vendors across Tunisian cities are descendants from the eastern and southern border regions with higher poverty, illiteracy and unemployment rates.

Two of the fieldwork destinations that exemplify the geo-morphological implications of the phenomenon in the region of the Western Centre of Tunisia were Elmdhilla in the governate of Gafsa and El-Souk El-Jdid in the governate of Sidi Bouzid. Indeed, these two governates are adjacent and their inhabitants have common tribal ancestors. However, they vary in economic terms as El-Mdhilla is a hub of extraction industries whereas El-Souk El-Jdid is more renown for trade, farming and shepherding. However, both locations have a high rate of their youth migrate to the near, and more economically prosperous, coast of Sahel. Those who did remain reported during our meetings with them that they have limited choices of income sources as the economic networks of their areas are incompatible to the demands of their increasingly educated youth. The issue that both focus groups raised was their feeling of alienation and marginalisation by the regional and central authorities as their natural resources are 'exploited by other regions with a minimal positive impact on their own lives'. They stated that this inferiority drives the unemployed youth to abandon the dream of a legal job opportunity and seek an informal source of income. For them, existing with a limited hope was an act of resistance against the state officials who deny them of their dignity and dreams. Indeed, because of the above-mentioned tribal ties, the inhabitants exhibit a popular compassion towards street vendors as they are their eventually their relatives.

### III. Street Vending after El-Bouazizi:

As revolutionary unrest swept through Tunisia, street traders were under dire working circumstances. In the first days of the rebellion, protests were abundant as the economic downfall produced a new class of unemployed or underemployed youth competing for scarce job opportunities. In effect, Informal employment has not decreased after 2011 in Tunisia.<sup>4</sup> Conversely, it spread in most Arab cities. A 2014 World Bank report posits that most MENA countries produce 33% of their GDP and 67% of their workforce informally.<sup>5</sup> In effect, a major informal activity across social and regional borders is street vending. A major sign that matters worsened for Tunisian street vendors is that a few of them kept resorting to the most violent form of protest against their conditions: suicide by self-immolation. A major official institute that monitors this social phenomenon is The Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights. It specialised in monitoring the progression of violence-related social phenomena. They declared that this form of suicide is trending among protesters in general, and in street vendors in particular as these cases have tripled since 2011. Indeed, "the rise has persisted right into 2020" as said Dr. Mehdi Ben Khelil, a researcher who specialises in suicide studies in Tunis's Charles Nicolle Hospital.<sup>6</sup> Such a sharp increase of numbers in such a limited time span reflects the dire economic crisis that affects all aspects of private and public lives and relations. Besides, there is a common state of mind delineated by despair that propagated through the population in the absence of hope both for an individual and communal emancipation. This contrast needs to be addressed in its legal, administrative, and political contexts for an accurate theoretical and practical analysis.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.solidaritycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Tunisia.Informal-Economy-Report.UGTT\\_.2014.ENGLISH.pdf](https://www.solidaritycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Tunisia.Informal-Economy-Report.UGTT_.2014.ENGLISH.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> World Bank (2014), Striving for better jobs: the challenge of informality in the Middle East and North Africa, Directions in Development Report No 90271, page 6

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.startribune.com/self-immolation-persists-as-grim-form-of-protest-in-tunisia/600002269/>

To undertake a detailed analysis, the diverse theoretical inputs needed to be paired with actual insights from the local citizens, NGOs, and authorities who are immediately involved in, and affected by, the phenomenon of street vendors in these under-privileged areas. The field work section of this paper has been the result of an intricate process of coordination with the local partners. This has been envisaged as a guarantee against the round table approach to social ailments that loses touch with the actual status quo by addressing it from afar without actual involvement. Such an involvement across the centre/periphery model of cooperation between local, central and international NGOs is relatively unprecedented in these regions as testified by the participants in our focus groups. Indeed, there were several logistical difficulties in the organisation of these events. Reaching these destinations was, by no means, simple, namely in Corona times with all the security arrangements across the different towns within social distancing measures. These local participants were already not that familiar with focus groups and local voluntary involvement in public affairs as the culture of active citizenship is quite limited among them due to the shortage of economic, social, and psychological conditions. This culture among the local inhabitants made it rather hard at times to incite them into a constructive exchange. Conversely, there was a noticeable presence of women and youth with genuine passion for the improvement of their communities. There was an interactive approach in the series of interviews with active organisations and volunteers in the previously mentioned border regions to reach a common analysis as a first step towards building a viable alternative system. Indeed, focusing on these areas is a result of the previous analysis of the imbalanced Tunisian economy. As such, the following analysis shall derive from these exchanges with the local stakeholders who had unanimously complained from all the levels of the political system whose officials who are said to be missing, unreachable, unwilling and/or unable to perform their chores, regarding the achievement of development.

## 1. **Administrative Issues:**

### **A. Decentralisation:**

One major popular demand during the rebellion was the disintegration of the central system of governance. As the first waves of dissent came from peripheral regions, the raising calls for a more localised political system have become more attractive among the population. This trend of decentralisation led to assigning more prerogatives in the 2014 constitution to locally regional and local council members after elections entrusted with designing and executing local plans for development. However, the impact of the long-seated dictatorship complicated the mission of these councils that lacked knowledge, experiences and skills. This flawed system of governance leads to an issue of authority placement in the regions where street vending is quite common. These dysfunctional decision taking and making processes fail to address the deep roots and complex manifestations of the local problems. In terms of legislation, the major impediment to decentralised governance is the Local Authorities Code, which is the law regulating the process of decentralisation in 2017. This law has barely been adopted by parliament on April 26, 2018 - just ten days before the municipal elections. This short notice led to the inability on the part of authorities to guarantee a proper electoral process is conducive to a chaos of texts and practices to replace the 1975 Bourguiba law on municipalities that gave local state representatives “neither real authority nor real administrative and financial autonomy,” as said the Tunisian journalist Hayfa Dhouib, in an analytical report on decentralisation in this decade.<sup>7</sup> This legislative ambiguity partakes in the dysfunction of the state powers that become all the more unable to execute reform measures and invest the available limited resources within comprehensive policies for the benefit of the vulnerable categories in these subaltern communities, chief of which are the street vendors.

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<sup>7</sup> Hayfa Dhouib, “Elections municipales : démystification d’une désaffection citoyenne” [Municipal elections: demystification of a disaffected citizen], Nawaat, March 13, 2018, <http://nawaat.org/portail/2018/03/13/elections-municipales-demystification-dune-desaffection-citoyenne/>.

## B. Bureaucracy:

Local actors were under the impression that they will be entrusted with the better part of powers in the new decentralised Tunisian system once elected. Conversely, the central state managed somehow to maintain authority through nominating representatives from the ruling parties in the local councils. The official in charge of Tunisia's post-2011 decentralisation process, Mokhtar Hammami, explained it thus: "The main dilemma that we faced was the dominance of the central system, which turned the municipalities into dependent facilities and stripped them of their powers. This centralisation created an expensive bureaucracy and distorted the image of the municipalities."<sup>8</sup> Additionally, there was a major security concern, namely in border areas, behind the creation, division or rearrangement of these municipalities so as to "impose the authority of the central state over the entire territory as many regions were created in exceptional circumstances regardless of development requirements."<sup>9</sup>

As far as street vendors are concerned, this is a recipe for a double disaster. Under these textual and administrative complexities, there was a major overlapping in the official handling of the problem. Indeed, multiple speakers in our local meetings have stated that the some street vendors in their region, graduates and otherwise, were persecuted due to the heavy load of documentation and procedures required from them to undertake their own entrepreneurial ideas. They were either unable to find the official answers or got mixed, and even contradictory, ones as the division of local prerogatives are by no means well-defined. These bureaucratic complications drove graduates to become street vendors. Indeed, they were denied access to state jobs opportunities and entry exams because of corrupt and incompetent officials. As such, they remain trapped in the conundrum of the status quo.

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<sup>8</sup> Hayfa Dhouib, "Discussion With Mokhtar Hammami on Decentralization: A New Approach in a Structural Crisis" [in Arabic], Nawaat, July 20, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

## 2. Political Economics:

### A. Transitional Politics:

This policy towards liberation through decentralisation has been growing to do without the heritage of dictatorship. However, there were several defects in this process, which led to a counterproductive outcome as illustrated above. Indeed, the major priority of the time was to establish new legal and administrative institutions replacing the Presidential autocracy. In this context, the attention was attributed to the political process initiated by the elections of Constituent Assembly's members. The ensuing ideological and partisan struggles was foregrounded in the public debates whether on mainstream and social media outlets or in the different apparatuses of the newly nascent regime. Besides, the onset of the syndical demands gave priority to workers in the formal economy, whether public or private businesses, and exempted street vendors as they were not under an official syndical structure. Thus, official narratives took precedence over the marginalised, namely the street vendors.

Adversely, the quintessentially economic mottos raised by the protesters were less impactful and popular. This led to the further marginalisation of the poorer categories in the society. Economic concerns are related to street vendors in that they have a considerable moral capital inspired from the figure of El-bouazizi. Yet, the political class, according to our witnesses, played the pragmatic tricks in partaking the elitist elections that took place successively. Candidates would frequent local voters in large campaigns, pretend to listen to them carefully and compassionately. Besides, they would heap promises upon them to improve their living conditions urgently and effectively. Once elected, these officials would cease to visit these remote areas altogether or seek economic solutions for the inhabitants or even respond to their concerns through problem solving or initiative taking. Thus, the political circumstances of this initial phase were not suitable to benefit these street vendors.

## **B. Educational Policies:**

The Tunisian educational sector has been subject to multiple reforms since 2011 in the hope of boosting the employability of its outcomes as school dropout and graduate joblessness rates are exponentially increasing. Indeed, the major challenge, in terms of curricula design; is “aligning educational outcomes with labour market.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, the focus is now on ensuring improved labour market conditions through a better educational and practical training. This shall partake in fostering social stability during the previously discussed thorny and slow-paced process of democratic transition. The link between this educational reform and street vendors is that those are often school dropouts who resorted to this mode survival because of, among others, the rising costs of education, the poor logistics of border regions educational institutions, and/or redundant programmes. As these individuals are not eligible to enter most public and private jobs, they are restricted to precarious forms of self-employment, often within the informal economy activities such as street vending.

Another layer in studying the impact of education on the phenomenon of street vending is the analysis of vocational training in Tunisia. This specialised form of education is more bent on acquiring practical skills rather than theoretical knowledges. It is supposedly addressed to students with academic underachievement and/or propensity for manual artefacts. As such, this should be an efficient shortcut to provide the job market with a much needed skilled workforce able to be well-paid and guaranteed social amenities. Yet, akin to academic curricula, vocational training programmes are inadequate because they are shallow, outdated, and complex in terms of the content and skills presented and their compatibility with the theoretical and practical needs of the employers and their employees at once.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/overview/track-series-reforms-are-set-overhaul-sector>

<sup>11</sup> <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/465581593566209488/pdf/Tunisia-Skills-Development-for-Employment-The-Role-of-Technical-and-Vocational-Education-and-Training.pdf>

### **3. Towards a Prototype of Tunisian Street Vendors:**

#### **A. Individual Factors:**

According to a 2013 World Bank policy research working paper, street vending has become a major source of income for many Tunisians who suffer from precarious working conditions and an increasing unemployment rate of 15.2 percent.<sup>12</sup> More often than not, these individuals have little choice in adopting this line of work in the context of the overwhelming local, regional and global economic crises. As such, the proper analysis of their condition should avoid two opposite fallacies: the first is to consider them as innocent bystanders of a dysfunctional system to be held accountable for the entire situation and the other is to exclusively hold them accountable as ‘lawless crooks’ exhibiting all types of social evils. It follows that the approach to this matter should not be limited to keeping them off the brink of poverty and somewhat ‘guarantee’ their survival with ‘poverty relief allowances’ that cannot function as a consistent and dependent capital for a life-long dignified income in a structured development plan. Similarly, limiting the official response to the phenomenon of street vendors to security measures reflects a strategic flaw. As they are viewed as legal aberrations, the state, through its law enforcers of police and customs agents, contends itself with stopping this activity by banning it legally and practically. The failure to tackle this practice as a symptom of a deeper problem leads to the failure to provide a viable alternative to the different stakeholders involved within the legal framework. As such, the official mindset of problem solving lacks long-term planning mindset is stuck in the fire fighting course on action in that it only responds to incidents and problems upon their happening, not in a pre-mediated pre-emptive strategic set of measures that addresses. An immediate aftermath of this is that the demands of the street vendors are not efficiently met but instead proliferated and complicated by the accentuated negligence of the incompetent officials.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.urbanafrika.net/news/uncertain-but-necessary-street-vending-in-tunis/>

Avoiding the previously explained two flawed sets of strategies is a fundamental starting point. This sound methodology that does without extremes conduces to an analysis that addresses the factors shaping the existence of street vendors as such. These economic, political, and other agents have been previously analysed. Yet, this is, by no means, a total exonerating of street vendors from all responsibility in their status quo. A more accurate diagnosis needs to delineate a comprehensive portrayal of the issue by dividing the responsibility between the street vendors themselves and the political, economic, social, cultural, and psychological variables impacting their experiences direct and indirect alike. Attempting to trace a sketch of the common features among ‘typical’ street vendor in poorer border areas of Tunisia is the first epistemological step towards addressing their concerns. As already mentioned, these citizens are often in the crux of legal ambiguity, political dysfunction, economic difficulties, administrative bureaucracy, and educational inadequacy.

The following level of analysis shall tackle the social stigma around street vendors; whether through mainstream media representations of this category or through the NGOs’ assessment of their situation. These individuals are portrayed to be ‘selfish, opportunistic, and dodgy hustlers’. They are frowned upon as a nuisance to the public scenery of the cities and a breach of laws and regulations that adds to the traffic jams in crowded streets. More significantly, these individuals are held responsible by some economy experts for sponsoring terrorism, even if unawares. Terrorism is said to benefit from the gains of the informal economy, especially through smuggling goods from the underdeveloped Western and the Southern border areas. Such an incriminating perspective fails to level these accusations equally to the key players in this corrupt industry: sponsors, mediators, and transporters. Indeed, under the guise of terrorism, its victims are being further persecuted. In smaller cities and country sides, the street vendors are dubbed as “lazy degenerates” who view themselves above the classical agricultural chores, and thus their problem is not studied constructively.

### **B. Soft Skills, NGOs and Micro-financing:**

The third dimension in the portrayal of street vendors is the assessment of their ‘soft skills’ that allow them, besides their academic and professional trainings, to claim a dignified job opportunity. More often than not, these individuals rightly think of themselves as day-to-day survivors rather than textbook entrepreneurs. This lack of knowledge and skills would make their experiences even harder. The observations made in this section are based on the experiences of the members in a local development association specialised in manufacturing cactus-based products, which is located in the countryside of the Gasserine region. Their area has been a stage of several terrorist attacks still occurring nowadays. This is coupled with record levels of poverty and unemployment when compared with other regions in the country. Their initial idea is quite innovative in that it aims at empowering housewives in an extremely poor town by investing in this local plant to the maximum. The major issue in their business model was lacking the knowledge that they need a plan. To add insult to injury, the local state representatives were often unreachable and not cooperative, and these artisans lack the legal and communicative skills to claim their rights and hold those officials accountable.

Another flaw in their business model is poor marketing through social media platforms or local shops. In terms of innovation, logistic means are scarce for them. In this context, that was a reason the leader of the Agricultural Association in Gasserine resisted the idea of starting a Facebook page to promote their creations nationwide and increase their outcome. It follows that their business skills is severely lacking as they do not think of this activity as a chosen profession with a long-term outline, but rather as an amateur last resort for subsistence. Thus, their great ideas and strenuous efforts were largely incompatible with their minimal profits due to avoidable strategic mistakes if they had the theoretical knowledge and practical skills to guarantee their future income in a consistent manner.

#### **IV. Key Research Messages:**

These recommendations unite theoretical and practical concerns and they are issued for the street vendors, activists, researchers, and officials alike.

##### **1. For researchers:**

- It is imperative to broaden the scope of the disciplines used by researchers in studying the phenomenon of street vending to do justice to its complex causes, aspects, and effects.
- It is of great moment to rectify the premises of those researchers and their goals: not to vilify or deify the individuals and the institutions but to address their conditions efficiently.

##### **2. For Local Officials:**

- Structuring street vendors into a less informal web of local coordinating bodies helps them avoid lawfulness and establish more civic relations with the authorities and the customers.
- Forming a protest movement with a gradual and clearly delineated course of actions based on research and practical techniques like focus groups, proximity debates and policy writing.

##### **3. For Local NGOs:**

- Providing the local officials with the needed knowledges, skills, and resources to perform their prerogatives within the process of decentralising the political system of governance.
- NGOs need to adopt a less elitist and simplistic, more field work-based, and more long-term set of solutions in remote and underprivileged areas suffering from lack of development.

##### **3. For Local Communities:**

- Forsaking the stigma-based approach to street vendors for a genuine holistic social reform. The discourses around the phenomenon need to be thoroughly studied and analysed.
- Empowering micro-economics through investing in local initiatives, not by a centralised bureaucracy but through creating efficient and consistent local business networks.

**\* The Street Vendors:**

- Drawing on actual feedback from street vendors through conducting interviews and comprehensive case studies with the official and unofficial stakeholders in the phenomenon.
- Coupling the analysis of the status quo with a design of a viable alternative for them in their local setting while taking their circumstances into account upon undertaking the theoretical research and the practical process of political reform against corruption.

**V. Conclusions:**

This case study is based on two complimentary pillars: a theoretical background and a practical analysis. The theoretical framework of the analysis begins by presenting several definitions of the concept, each of which foregrounds one of its aspects. This multiplicity helps form a more accurate perception of the problem. Afterwards, a survey of this practice since the independence was illustrated to trace its historical origins. After discussing its roots, the multi-disciplinary analysis of street vending in modern day Tunisia unites to ensure as comprehensive an understanding of the phenomenon as possible. Insights from economics, political sciences, psychology and sociology were invested to account for the motives, circumstances, and obstacles that the individual stakeholders are undergoing. The second pillar of the analysis adopted field work outputs from focus groups organised by NGOs with local street vendors and relevant stakeholders in three of the poorer border regions of Tunisia. The first-hand insights from these participants are incorporated into the research to illustrate their concerns, demands, and suggestions. The diverse social and political relations between these citizens and street vendors on the one hand, and their relationships with the different state powers at the local, regional, and national levels on the other hand, have been studied from multiple perspectives so as to appropriately contextualise street vending for a more accurate understanding, assessment and reaction to this complex phenomenon.