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'Le Printemps Démocratique': Amazigh Activism in the February 20 Movement in Southern Morocco

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the participation of Amazigh activist groups in the so-called 'Moroccan Arab Spring', known as the February 20 Movement (F20M). It analyzes the activism of diverse Amazigh militants in both urban and rural areas and their relationship with other F20M militant groups. The article interrogates the Amazigh's dilemma of multi-scalar engagement and explores activism within and beyond the F20M that led to the formal recognition of Amazigh rights and culture in Morocco, particularly Tamazight as an official language.

KEYWORDS

Morocco; Amazigh activism; F20M; 'Democratic spring'; Tamazight language; Constitution 2011

The February 20 Movement (F20M) is a heterogeneous political movement composed of different political groups that organized a series of protests in February 2011, now commonly known as the 'Moroccan Arab Spring'. Inspired by the uprisings in Tunisia, which spread over the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, the F20M included various political groups and civil-society organizations belonging to three broad political denominations: leftist-democratic groups; Islamist groups; and Amazigh associations. Particularly for Amazigh militants, the F20M provided a new opportunity to make demands for cultural recognition from the Moroccan state (Maghraou 2011, Maddy-Weitzman 2015).

The protests in Morocco did not bring the overthrow of the regime as in Libya, Tunisia and Egypt. This is believed to be due to the King's prompt political overture in March 2011 (Gonzàles Riera 2011, Kamel and Huber 2015), which saw the amendment of the Constitution, followed by a referendum and parliamentary elections in the same year. The new constitution does not limit the powers of the King. However, it includes new important provisions: such as a programme for 'advanced regionalization', which aims to strengthen the role of regions by transfers of power and financial autonomy, the recognition of Tamazight as an official language and the inclusion of the Amazigh (and other minorities) as part of the country's cultural and linguistic heritage. The new Constitution, therefore, rapidly gained the support of the main political parties as well as civil-society organizations (CSOs), including some Amazigh groups. These measures slowly diffused participation in the wave of protests. Activists, political groups and CSOs that were part of the F20M and felt excluded from the constitutional drafting, however, decided to boycott the consultations over the content of the constitution.

Although the defensive strategy of the Monarchy managed to prevent the protests from becoming a revolution as in other countries (Kamel and Huber 2015, Bergh and Rossi-Doria 2015), Morocco is arguably an interesting case study 'of the mixed consequences of the Arab Spring for ethnic minorities', particularly for the Amazigh population (Fromherz 2014, p. 240). Recent studies have focused on issues related to F20M strategies and outcomes (see Benchemsi 2012, Dalmasso 2012,

Desrues, 2012, 2013, Fernandez Molina 2011, Gonzàles Riera 2011, Hoffmann and König 2013, Pace and Cavatorta 2012, Bergh and Rossi-Doria 2015) and Amazigh activism (Fromherz 2014, Maddy-Weitzman 2012, 2015, Silverstein 2013). This article builds on this literature. It focuses on the constitutional achievements recently obtained by Amazigh activism in Morocco as an important step in their official recognition as a collective of people who belong to the historical and cultural heritage of Morocco. This makes the achievement a unique case for an 'ethnic minority' in the whole MENA region.

This article is based on qualitative fieldwork conducted between November 2013 and March 2014 as part of a wider research project on the relationship between centre and peripheries during the F2OM (see Bergh and Rossi-Doria 2015). The material used here is based on semi-structured interviews with 26 respondents representing 17 organizations, both in urban areas, Marrakesh and Rabat, and in the rural areas of the Zat Valley, located in the High Atlas (Al Houz province), where the majority of the Amazigh population resides. I interviewed at least one activist from the most representative F2OM associations, political parties and trade unions in both urban and rural areas. The interviews were conducted in various languages: French, English and Spanish, and in Arabic and Tamazight with the help of an interpreter.

Starting from an historical overview of Amazigh activism in Morocco, the following sections explore Amazigh militants' participation in the F2OM that led up to constitutional change. Rooting my analysis within and beyond the political space created by the protest itself, I will argue that it was the multi-scalar engagement rather than the participation in the F2OM per se that culminated in the important pro-Amazigh provision in the new Constitution.

Historical overview of Amazigh activism in Morocco

The Amazigh constitute about 40% of Morocco's population (Madani 2003, Silverstein and Crawford 2004, Maddy-Weitzman 2006). To understand the roots of Amazigh activism in Morocco, it is important to draw briefly on the historical factors that have brought about their marginalization despite their significant numbers, particularly in the last century.

Urban and rural areas of Morocco have been divided historically through political and administrative measures. In pre-colonial Morocco and later during the French protectorate (1912–56), urban and central parts of the country were known as *Bled Makhzen*, translated as 'land under the control of the Sultans'. These areas were considered to be 'more Arab' and generally more orderly, following established official rules. By contrast, rural and peripheral lands were known as *Bled Siba*, a term that denoted areas inhabited by Berber tribes who did not submit to the control of the Sultans (Heize and Fitzmaurice 1998, p. 425, Maghroui 2003, Saint-Prot 2010, Silverstein 2013). These areas were stereotyped as 'lands without authority',

where effective state sovereignty was rarely present, [and where they] continue to underwrite tensions with the central state (el-makhzan) ... Such tensions between centre and periphery formed the basis of colonial politics under the French Protectorate, but perdured in slightly altered form in the relations of the independent Moroccan state with rural notables and administrators. (Silverstein 2013, pp. 769–770)

According to some of my respondents¹, in order to maintain control over rural peripheries, King Hassan II deliberately marginalized rural areas by disconnecting them from urban political activity all the way up to the 1960s. This 'divide and rule' strategy relied on the cooperation of local notables, major landowners and local elites (Leveau 1985), as well as the King's local representatives, security forces and state-appointed officials overseeing rural areas (Leveau 1985, Bergh and Rossi-Doria 2015, Silverstein 2013).

The nationalist post-independence discourse that emerged after the 1950s seemed to marginalize the Amazigh further as it centred on the 'Arab' as the focus of national unity. Any 'other' cultural influence on the country's heritage was dismissed (Maddy-Weitzman 2006, Silverstein 2013). As Silverstein and Crawford argue, 'viewing Berber cultural identity as largely a colonial invention designed to

fragment the Moroccan nation, the 1950s nationalist movement ... sought to forge a univocal identity for Moroccans along the ideological lines of an Arab nationalism imported primarily from Egypt and Lebanon' (2004, p. 44).

Amazigh activism started in the 1960s as a reaction to precisely this Arab nationalist discourse. Through cultural forms of resistance, and under the aegis of the Moroccan Association for Research and Cultural Exchange (AMREC), activists aimed to preserve and disseminate Amazigh culture, folklore and oral traditions. By the 1970s, many more Amazigh cultural associations were established, among which were the Université d'Été d'Agadir and the association of Tamaynunt, both considered the most active and important in those years (see Maddy-Weitzman 2001 and Crawford 2002).

The Algerian 'Berber Spring' in 1980 eventually transformed these initial local forms of cultural militancy into a political movement. Amazigh activism ultimately acquired an international and transnational dimension with the creation of the Berber Cultural Movement (MCB) that promoted Amazigh culture through international conferences and a published journal. But, while the 'Berber Spring' blossomed in Algeria, Amazigh political militancy in Morocco was largely repressed during the 1980s, and most Moroccan Amazigh activists only joined the rising Amazigh transnational movement in the mid-1990s through the creation of the World Amazigh Congress (CMA) (see Cornwell and Atia 2012; Silverstein and Crawford 2004, pp. 44–48). As Maddy-Weitzman argues, in 'Algeria, the dimension of their efforts [was] overtly political ... [while] in Morocco, state–community relations have been less confrontational, and less overtly political, but have significantly evolved in that direction in recent years' (2006, p. 72).

The mid-1990s are considered a turning point in the history of Amazigh activism. An outcry against particular episodes of repression near Errachidia (when seven members of the Amazigh association Tilleli were arrested in Goulmina, in south-east Morocco, for protesting for the recognition of their language – see Sater 2009, p. 72) pressured the Moroccan government to agree to initiate a discussion regarding an open recognition of Amazigh culture. In August 1994, King Hassan II conceded the first recognition declaring that Amazigh 'dialects' were 'one of the components of the authenticity of Moroccan history' (Silverstein and Crawford 2004, Sater 2009, pp. 72–73). This became an opportunity for Amazigh militants to set up associations across Morocco and to publish newspapers promoting the preservation of Amazigh culture and language (Silverstein and Crawford 2004). In spite of these overtures, nothing really changed until his son, Mohammed VI, ascended to the throne in 1999 (see Maddy-Weitzman and Zisenwine, 2012). The new Monarch no longer considered the integration of Amazigh culture as a challenge for national unity. Rather, it became part of his reformist programme to the extent that in 2001, through a royal edict (*dahir*), the King created the Royal Institute of the Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) with a mandate to safeguard and promote Amazigh culture and to establish linguistic standardization for teaching purposes. The establishment of the institute represented the first significant step for a new path between the Moroccan state and the Amazigh population. Soon after, mandatory classes in Tamazight language were introduced in areas with an Amazigh majority (Rif, Middle Atlas, High Atlas and Sous) of which IRCAM was in charge (Silverstein and Crawford 2004, Cornwell and Atia 2012, Maddy-Weitzman 2006).

The royal initiative gained the support of some Amazigh activists who were involved in IRCAM's administrative council and were committed to equal representation from the three regions with a major Amazigh population (Rif, Middle Atlas and Sous). However, the establishment of IRCAM *de facto* divided the Amazigh activists into two factions: while some embraced the royal overture and considered it a first step to eliminate certain cultural and linguistic forms of discrimination in Morocco, others saw it as yet another 'divide and rule' strategy with a hidden intent to split the rising Amazigh movement (Silverstein and Crawford 2004, Silverstein 2013). External observers suggested that the Royal *dahir* (also known as 'the Berber *dahir*') might be considered a response to international pressures on Morocco to recognize minority rights (Silverstein and Crawford 2004, Fromherz 2014, Silverstein 2013). Silverstein (2013), for example, argues that beyond its fragmenting effects on opposition politics, the creation of IRCAM hides forms of discrimination.

If, on an international level, the protection of cultural rights has been postulated as a precondition for entry into the ranks of democracies, on a domestic level it has been upheld as a means of fostering national unity. But, ironically, the IRCAM dahir seems to fetishize Berberness ... [and] pave[s] the way for different educational formats in different parts of the kingdom. The areas where Berber is to be the language of instruction are in large part the countryside rather than the city, making rural and urban education even more separate and even less equal. (Silverstein and Crawford 2004, pp. 45–46)

The purpose of including this debate is not necessarily to take part in it, but rather to build a comparison between the establishment of the IRCAM and the pro-Amazigh changes in the 2011 constitution, which will be discussed in the next section. In both cases, the regime's overtures have had a fragmenting effect on the Amazigh. Critics, at least, see these allowances as means for 'cultural cooptation' through which the Moroccan state establishes itself as the only guarantor of cultural production, over which it has unmistakable control.

Claiming the F20M

Everyone defines it as the 'Arab Spring', in spite of the great participation of Amazigh. We prefer to call it the *Democratic Spring*.²

The February 20 Movement was comprised of different groups, such as left-wing political parties, students, trade unions, CSOs and Islamist groups majorly represented by Justice and Charity (*al-Adl wal-Ihsan*). Unsurprisingly, the varied nature of these groups was bound to create divergences across the movement. For the Amazigh, the participation of their activists and associations in the protests once again proved to be cause for internal division within the Amazigh movement, despite eventual constitutional achievements.

The F20M had an 'embryonic' structure characterized by sporadic coordination between the national committee in support of the protests (the 'National Council of Support for the 20 February Movement', CNSAM20), established in Rabat, and the demonstrations in single cities across the country. The support committee was composed of more than 100 civil-society organizations, political parties and trade unions. Because the national committee was merely a financial backer with no decision-making power (Hoffmann and König 2013, pp. 5–6), the contact among the different F20M groups was generally reduced to attending local council meetings (*conseils locaux*) that coordinated the protests in each city. For example in Marrakesh, the *conseil local* coordinated 14 different groups and associations, including Amazigh political groups and independent militants. This set-up allowed Amazigh political groups to be part of the protests without linking themselves to any specific party, thus keeping an equidistant position from both leftist-democratic wings of the movement and Islamist political groups.

The F20M protests gave way to a new political space in which different groups would put forward their own demands to the regime. 'Even though most of the groups found common ground in issues such as social justice, the division of powers and constitutional rights, they did not become a unified political movement. Rather ... the movement created a unique momentum that each group tried to exploit for its own benefit' (Bergh and Rossi-Doria 2015, p. 8). Particularly for the Amazigh from both urban and rural areas, the participation in demonstrations during (and after³) the F20M proved to be a way to carry on with the struggle for the recognition of Amazigh culture and rights.⁴ During the F20M, their demands were not limited to the recognition of Tamazight as an official language. They were also centred on condemning their economic marginalization and requesting more infrastructures in rural areas. Amazigh activists also demanded the protection of tribal lands from ongoing expropriation by state agents and private speculators.

All the respondents in my research agreed that during the first months of the protests, the national media predominantly tried to discredit and delegitimize the F20M in various ways. As an Amazigh activist argued, 'at the beginning of the protests some media often associated us [Amazigh] with the Polisario⁵, or portrayed us as Israeli or Algerian friends. Sometimes they even defined us as non-Muslims.⁶ However, the media gradually gave a major voice to the protesters' demands until

the announcement of the new constitution, when most of the media shifted their focus from the protests to the constitutional phase inaugurated by the King.

Throughout this period, Amazigh political militants took part in the protests with consistent numbers of participants. But beyond the apparent coherence across the political spectrum of the movement, differences began to brew, as an independent Amazigh militant recounted:

The debut of the movement was cohesive and consistent. In that period the F20M was united to pursue its objectives. Then, after the first few weeks, disagreements and differences emerged among the various groups. ... We had ideological discussions with both leftists and Islamists, even though we had been sharing some of the main political objectives and social concerns during the F20M, it doesn't mean that we agree, as Amazigh, with the Islamic or the Marxists propaganda of those days.⁷

One of the main reasons behind these frictions is related to how Amazigh demands were perceived by a number of 'leftist-democratic' activists. There was a range of mixed views on the particularities of Amazigh demands. For example, most of the non-Amazigh F20M respondents I interviewed did not consider the recognition of Amazigh language and culture as one of the major objectives of the protests. One member of the Moroccan branch of the transnational Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions and Citizen's Action (ATTAC-Maroc) argued that 'the recognition of Amazigh culture is the only point accepted by the *Makhzen* [Monarchy],⁸ among the F20M proposals, but we have never considered it a main objective.' Nevertheless, among those who considered these objectives as minor ones, some believed they were important enough to be raised to the regime. Other F20M activists objected to the difficulties of implementing Amazigh demands *in practice*. A young member of the Socialist Union of Popular Force (USFP) pointed out that 'the official recognition of Tamazight Language is just a populist move. How can we recognize it as an official language if it is only used within families? How can we implement it in the national education system if Tamazight does not have a grammatical structure? [...] When we talk about rights we must be realistic.' Another senior member of the USFP felt that, 'as non-Amazigh, I see it as a positive step for the integration of the marginalized Amazigh communities, but we will need time to make it work.'

Departing slightly from these views, some F20M militants considered the recognition of Amazigh culture mainly a regional matter, which should be part of the decentralization agenda: 'This is not a national issue, the Tamazight teaching should be implemented at a regional level. The recognizing of their culture and their language must be related to the regions with a majority of Amazigh population,' declared an activist of the Democratic Way. The F20M activists that tended to deny Amazigh claims completely seemed to be a minority and argued that Morocco has an Arab-Amazigh culture 'so intertwined after centuries of cohabitation that today the claim of *Amazighité* does not make sense'.⁹

Significantly, the following opinion expressed by an Amazigh member of the Moroccan Association of Human Rights (AMDH) summarizes the concerns of a good number of non-Amazigh respondents:

The recognition of the Tamazight language is a populist move that will exacerbate the tension between Arabs and Amazigh groups and communities; this is an ethnic issue that never existed in Morocco ... I am myself Amazigh and Arab. Morocco has always had an Arab-Amazigh history and culture. I think that the official recognition of the Tamazight language is just a way to divert the attention from the major social and political ills that are affecting the country. The dichotomy Amazigh/Arab is dangerous! It proposes, again, a division that characterized the colonial period that was used by the Arab nationalists afterwards.

The aims and objectives of the F20M created divergences not only among 'non-Amazigh' militants but also among Amazigh associations and political groups themselves, many of whom decided not to participate at all in the protests. A significant example is the case of the Amazigh Network for Citizenship (AZETTA). Officially, the AZETTA did not join the F20M, though its central bureau left the choice¹⁰ of participation to its individual members. The result was that one-third of its members participated on a 'personal basis' rather than as AZETTA representatives. These divisions persisted after the F20M and through the drafting of the new Constitution. In their extreme, divisions

resulted in accusations of cooptation and betrayal of Amazigh on both sides of these arguments. An independent Amazigh militant, for example, argued that the new constitution should have been rejected due to the lack of a democratic process during the drafting. This, he felt, delegitimized the F20M claims and the constitution itself. Furthermore, he problematized the fifth article of the new constitution that officially recognizes the Tamazight language, because 'in the way that it was written, it subordinated Tamazight to Arabic.' This activist was contesting the fifth article of the 2011 constitution which defined Arabic as '*the* official language of the state' while it considered Tamazight '*an* official language of the state'. This, he argued, clearly 'subordinated' Tamazight to Arabic.

By contrast, a young member of the AZETTA had a different approach:

We won't wait for the 'perfect state' to obtain the recognition of Amazigh rights. Even though most of the F20M boycotted the constitutional drafting, we are glad that finally there *is* a recognition of Amazigh heritage and the adoption of the Tamazight as official language. Independently from the divergences among *us* this is something that must be considered positive for *our* people.

In retrospect, regardless of Amazigh activists' position vis-à-vis the fifth article of the constitution, the lack of participation and the absence of a democratic process in the drafting, together with the delay of its application, have only reinforced the idea among most Amazigh militants interviewed that the F20M was just another step in the long-term confrontation with the Moroccan state for a full recognition of their rights.

Urban-rural divides in the F20M

One of the significant limitations of the F20M was its inability to engage activist groups in rural areas. The F20M was mainly composed of urban-based activists who had sporadic contact with rural areas. The different (and sometimes conflicting) understandings¹¹ of the demands for social justice in the two areas meant that a discursive connection could not be established between urban and rural protests (Bogaert 2015, Bergh and Rossi-Doria 2015). Typically, the divide was over the nature of demands; rural activists focused on material demands such as better infrastructures and local economic development (Bergh and Rossi-Doria 2015), whereas urban activists concentrated on constitutional arrangements and demands for political change. In Marrakesh, for example, members of the Moroccan National Students' Union (UNEM) felt that their efforts in rural areas were frustrated by the rural population's lack of interest in their demands. Among my interviewees, however, some urban activists were critical of their own political groups, such as the Socialist Union of Popular Force (USFP) and the Socialist Democratic Vanguard Party (PADS), for their insufficient engagement in rural areas (see also Allaoui 2010, p. 88, Bergh 2010, p. 745).

Activists in rural areas, in their turn, felt that urban activists were dismissive of their own needs. The rural population did not seem to trust F20M activists, precisely due to the lack of political engagement demonstrated by the main political parties. Rural respondents argued that the F20M urban-based activists' slogans and demands did not represent them. More importantly, they did not believe in the success of the F20M¹², which, according to them, was destined to fail as all the previous urban protests. Broadly speaking, urban activists who tried to be politically engaged in rural areas were usually young militants, mostly students, who had migrated to urban areas and returned to their rural homelands to support local protests. In this sense, 'most of the actions were organized on the basis of the individual capacity of these militants, based on local feelings of belonging and "social capital" rather than on the basis of their association membership' (Bergh and Rossi-Doria 2015, p. 9). A member of ATTAC-Maroc in Marrakesh, for example, who wanted to support the protests of his home city of origin Kal'a M'Gouna in the peripheries of Ouarzazate, could not persuade local activists of his organization's support, which they dismissed as 'urban-based activism'. It is significant that an organization like the Moroccan Association of Human Rights (AMDH) in Marrakech failed to organize a protest in the rural area of Ait Ourir, just 30 km away. During the protests in the Zat Valley, while AMDH members continued to act as consultants on legal matters, they could

not frame the protests politically because local activists did not want to be associated with the main Moroccan human-rights association, which they feared would complicate rather than help their cause with local authorities.

There were exceptions to this rural/urban divide. The groups that were most able to maintain political activity across areas were Islamist groups such as Justice and Charity (al-Adl wal-Ihsan) and some Amazigh associations and political groups. Among the Amazigh, the national association Tamaynut particularly managed to bridge this divide, assuming in certain circumstances the role of a national contact point for certain fringes of the Amazigh activists. In remote rural areas, local branches of Tamaynut even coordinated protests. Tighdouine is a case in point, where the two main local Amazigh associations (Tamaynut and Yagour) were able to coordinate the protests to raise localized demands to the local municipality and to the *Caïd*, the state-appointed official (Bergh and Rossi-Doria 2015). A member of the association Tamaynut in Tighdouine explained their strategies and the development of their outlook that transcended the local.

When we created the local branch of the association in Tighdouine, the authorities opposed us, and we did not have the full support of local people ... But in the following months the role of the association was appreciated for the help it provided with the local community. The association Tamaynut provided and still provides the political and cultural expertise and knowledge to sustain the Amazigh cause locally ... Our main focus is still on identity and land, but we understood that we need a national strategy to support our claims, and in this, national associations such as the AZETTA and other Amazigh associations have been very helpful to foster our cause.¹³

Where local demonstrations took place in the rural Zat valley, they were coordinated by an existing informal organization called Tansikiyya Arbia Tighedouine¹⁴ as well as through other local-development associations. In other words, in these areas the F20M was possible only due to these pre-existing networks. It is important to note that in rural areas local mobilizations started *before* the F20M (in the early 2000s) and have increased in more recent years (see Bennafra and Emperador 2010, Bogaert 2015, Hadj-Moussa 2013, Lahbib 2011, p. 18, Planel 2011, Suarez Collado 2015). Bogaert (2015) confirms the importance of local *tansikiyya* (or *tansikiyyat*) as a vital element in the mobilization of people in small towns and rural peripheries during the F20M. Similar to Tighdouine, the protests in the Rif were mobilized by local identities which became a cohesive factor that characterized political participation during and after the F20M. These enabled local Amazigh associations to formulate clear political-territorial demands (Maddy-Weitzman 2015, Suarez Collado 2015).

In sum, while the urban-based activists tried, with little effects, to mobilize rural populations to broaden the F20M horizon, the activists in the rural areas did *not* try to connect their protests to the urban F20M groups (Bergh and Rossi-Doria 2015). Local branches of Amazigh associations, such as the aforementioned Tamaynut, however, succeeded in building their own network that incorporated local associations and supported localized demonstrations. The most successful Amazigh national associations were the ones able to scale up local rural claims to the national and international levels through multi-scalar engagements. The next section will address these efforts.

Multi-scalar engagement

Silverstein argues that engagement at different scales brings 'both benefits and costs' and is characterized by 'different scales of discourse and action as they address different audiences and operate in different cultural and political contexts' (2013, p. 770). While this may give access to new financial resources and networks of power, Silverstein warns that it may also potentially erode 'other bases of support' (Ibid, p. 771). In this sense, Amazigh activism experiences 'ethical and pragmatic discontinuities between activist engagement at different scales' and it is this, he argues, 'rather than their ideological divergences [that] constitutes the principal source of the Amazigh movement's internal fragmentation' (Silverstein 2013, p. 768). Silverstein's main concern is how Amazigh activists 'negotiate between different scales of engagement with their home communities, the national state, and the transnational movement for indigenous rights' and how they 'balance their participation

in national and transnational fora'. In sum, how 'they manage their multi-scalar political struggle' (ibid, p. 769).

Where the demands of one scalar engagement compete with the demands of another, Amazigh activists' simultaneous identification and practical belonging as members of tribal lineages, Berber-speakers, Muslims, Moroccan citizens, and transnational militants for the rights of indigenous peoples are not competing differences of degree, but co-existing differences of kind, with radically different modes of action and obligation entailed by each orientation. (Silverstein 2013, pp. 769–770)

Many of the activists I interviewed were involved in a wide range of multi-scalar initiatives. While they organized localized rural protests that demanded protection of the tribal lands, deforestation and local socio-economic marginalization, they participated in marches for the recognition of national claims, such as the recognition of Amazigh linguistic and cultural heritage, and, at the same time, they were active in international fora that lobbied for indigenous people's transnational alliances and human rights. None of them seemed to perceive contradictions in their multi-scalar engagement; the demands of these different scales correlated rather than competed.

As a member of the association Yagour in Tighdouine explained:

Nowadays the engagement in a multi [scalar] struggle is the means through which Amazigh activism can obtain the achievement of its different objectives. We fight for the preservation of our culture, the social and economic development of our lands, and the safeguard of our environment. We are concerned about our identity and our land; we fight for our dignity and our human rights ... Locally, we are protesting against deforestation, and the consequent desertification of our lands, for the lack of water, for the safeguard of the cave sites of the plateau Yagour, and we are discussing the juridical possibilities for a local autonomy. We are in touch with the AZETTA and other national Amazigh associations; together we undertake many projects, we participate in conferences, marches and demonstrations ... We are a pacifist movement, we demonstrate to challenge the Palace ... All the strategies are used for the same objective; to obtain the maximum possible for the recognition of our rights.

Locally, the national Tamaynut association has shown its capability to overcome the initial mistrust of the local population in remote rural municipalities, such as Tighdouine, thus becoming a contact point to address local problems and catalyze local initiatives.

As Oiry-Varacca (2012) stresses, some Amazigh associations such as the Tamaynut function on a double level, both locally (one might add nationally) and internationally. On one hand, the association's network is composed of local (and national) associations. On the other, it follows the agenda of transnational Amazigh organizations. For instance Tamaynut is part of the World Amazigh Congress (CMA) network. Its national association is composed of 32 regional branches within Morocco. But it also has branches abroad (e.g. France and Netherlands). In this sense, the role of the association is not limited to the coordination of local protests or the participation in local coordinating bodies, the *tansikiyya* (or *tansikiyat*). In practice, it connects localized protests and demands to a broader national and international struggle for the recognition of Amazigh culture and rights (Oiry-Varacca 2012, pp. 44–46). The participation of Amazigh groups in significant international forums, such as the 'Fourth World', the internationally unrecognized nations' forum, has permitted them, especially during the last decade, to scale up their struggle for the preservation of regional language and artistic patrimony. Their participation in the global discourse of indigenous rights and self-determination has allowed Amazigh to gain international support which in its turn has had a certain degree of influence on the reformist policies promoted by the Moroccan state in the last few years (Oiry-Varacca 2012, Silverstein 2013).

Arguably, the Amazigh activists I interviewed confirm Silverstein's concern about balancing their simultaneous identifications, even though they seem to have developed strategies to reconcile tensions that arise in the so-called 'multi-scalar dilemma'. Multi-scalar engagement still presents obstacles and exacerbates tensions among the different activist groups, as underlined by Silverstein. The point made here is that the fragmentation and contradictions that might affect Amazigh activists' political struggle are not necessarily related to engagement at different scales of discourses but rather to the manner in which different groups deal with 'the Palace'. While some militants (such

as AZETTA) perceived the dialogue with the Moroccan state and the ensuing royal overtures as a positive step for the recognition of Amazigh rights in Morocco, others opposed this strategy and favoured pressuring the state more strongly through street demonstrations (with F20M Amazigh groups) and boycotting the constitutional drafting afterward. There were some, mostly in rural areas, who perceived these strategies as complementary rather than conflictual and even necessary for the achievement of their objectives.¹⁵

One question that emerges out of this discussion relates to the efficacy of Amazigh activism in relation to the new constitutional changes. To what extent can we attribute the formal constitutional recognition of Amazigh rights to the F20M and their visible activism in the 'Printemps Démocratique'? These achievements beg the question of pragmatism played out in the politics of the Moroccan state. Previous overtures, such as the aforementioned 'Berber Dahir', demonstrate how the state counteracts high cost demands, such as those made by the Amazigh, by issuing edicts with 'low political costs' that serve to placate activists, at least in the short term. Scholars of Morocco have pointed out that reform has been largely a top-down affair (see Maghroui 2011; Siverstein 2011; Maddy-Weitzman 2012). Where civil-society groups have been involved, their participation did not necessarily lead to institutional change. Maddy-Weitzman, for example, argues that:

The monarchy would pursue a dual policy of recognition and containment, support and co-optation, with an eye to creating another counterweight to the Islamists. While not posing a threat of inter-ethnic violence or to the country's territorial integrity, the dimensions and impact of the Amazigh movement on Morocco will nevertheless bear watching in the coming years. Just as there has been considerable continuity in the palace's modus operandi vis-à-vis the country's social and political forces in order to maintain its hegemony. (Maddy-Weitzman 2012, pp. 5–7)

With the particular issue of the constitution, some analysts have offered a different perspective, suggesting a more 'genuine' approach to reform. Maghroui analyzes the King's response to the F20M in light of the developments in other regimes affected by the Arab Uprisings. 'The new monarch does carry with him a spirit for economic and social reforms which, given the recent popular pressure, has been translated into constitutional reforms ... In a wise move to pre-empt the demands of the February 20 Movement, the King announced the drafting of a new constitution' (2011, p. 693).

Whether or not the King's proactive promotion of Amazigh rights was another exercise of pragmatism and maintenance of low political costs, it can be argued that the Amazigh's participation in the F20M, in light of their continuous multi-scalar activism, acted as a successful 'push' for pro-Amazigh constitutional reforms, ones the Amazigh activists had been waiting for for more than four decades. Given the pacifist history of the Amazigh movement, and in contrast with the achievements obtained by their fellow Amazigh in neighbouring states (see Cornwell and Atia 2012, Maddy-Weitzman 2012, 2015), the linguistic and cultural recognition gained in recent years from the Moroccan state must be considered a significant accomplishment that reinforces their legitimacy.

Conclusions

Amazigh activists in Morocco found in the F20M a new opportunity to push for more royal overtures, as in the case of IRCAM previously. After many years of militancy, in spite of internal divisions among Amazigh activists, divergences with *other* (non-Amazigh) F20M political groups and the initial opposition of Moroccan media, the participation in F20M has been successful in terms of constitutional achievements. By riding the wave of protests, they were able to obtain official recognition of their language and culture and reinstate them in Moroccan heritage. The new constitution includes important provisions for 'advanced regionalization' as well as the recognition of Tamazight as an official language, an issue inconceivable only a generation ago and thus a triumph for Amazigh activists. The new constitution defines Morocco as,

a sovereign Muslim State, committed to the ideals of openness, moderation, tolerance and dialogue to foster mutual understanding among all civilizations; A Nation whose unity is forged on the full diversity of its constituents: Arabic, Amazigh, Hassani, Sub-Saharan, African, Andalusian, Jewish and Mediterranean identities. (Fromherz 2014, p. 247)

This has made Morocco the only North African country (second after Iraq, if we consider Arab League member states) in which Arabic is *not* the unique official language.

Unlike most of the political groups and civil-society associations in the F20M, Amazigh militants were able to address both localized rural demands and major national claims to the regime through discourses of ethnic identity. This was made possible by their transnational alliances that had a certain degree of influence on the reformist policies promoted by the Moroccan state in the last decade.

Against these achievements, and not unlike previous ones (such as the creation of IRCAM), the reforms invited different interpretations among activists. While some Amazigh associations accepted to embrace the King's reforms, others still contested the risks of being co-opted. Either way, through these proactive steps, the monarchy managed to restore its primacy as the only guarantor of cultural promotion (which it *de facto* controls). Yet, not all Amazigh demands were accepted by the Moroccan state. It is this that resulted in the creation of the 'Front Amazigh' in Meknes in 2013. The Front is a network of more than 500 Amazigh associations that work under the aegis of Tamaynut with the aim to press their demands on the regime in the coming years. After the F20M, some Amazigh young militants founded a new group, Tawada, that has been organizing annual marches in the main cities to raise Amazigh demands. In spite of continuous internal divisions, this shows that the Amazigh struggle continues through new strategies and renovated networks to face multi-scalar challenges.

My work in Al Houz province has shown that, to a large extent, leaders of the local Amazigh associations and urban-based militants are slowly overcoming some of the problematic aspects around what Silverstein has described as the Amazigh 'scalar dilemma' (Silverstein 2013).

Notes

1. Interviews with members of Democratic Way Marrakech, 18 February 2014 and with a Member of USFP Marrakech, 19 February 2014.
2. Interview with a member of 'Amazigh Network for Citizenship' (AZETTA), Marrakech, 17 February 2014.
3. Besides the localized protests, significant political activism continued after the 20FM by groups such as the 'Tawada' association. See Maddy-Weitzman (2015).
4. Interview with a member of Amazigh Network for Citizenship (AZETTA). Marrakech, 17 February 2014. Interview with an Independent Amazigh Activist. Marrakech, 17 February 2014. Interview with a Member of Association Yagour Tighedouine, 1 March 2014. Interview with a member of the Association Tamaynut, Tighedouine, 1 March 2014.
5. The Front Polisario is a Saharawi rebel national-liberation movement that opposes the Moroccan sovereignty on Western Sahara.
6. Interview an Independent Amazigh Activist. Marrakech, 22 February 2014.
7. Interview with an Independent Amazigh Activist. Marrakech, 17 February 2014.
8. See Willis (2002, p. 7) for an in-depth discussion of '*makhzen*'.
9. Interview with a member of AMDH, Marrakech, 9 December 2013.
10. According to a member of the AZETTA, the internal regulation of the association permits its members freedom of expression. Interview in Marrakech 17 February 2014.
11. Group interview with various members of UNEM, Marrakech, 14 February 2014, Interview with a Member of ATTAC. Marrakech, 24 February 2014, Interview with a member of USFP Youth section. Marrakech, 24 February 2014. Interview with a former member of AMDH branch in Ait Ourir. Ait Ourir, 25 February 2014, Interview with the Secretary General of PADS. By phone, 25 February 2014, Interview with a member of AMDH. Marrakech, 11 December 2013, Interview with a member of AMDH Marrakech, 12 December 2013, 13 and 14 February 2014.
12. Interview with a member of AMDH branch in Ait Ourir. Ait Ourir, 1 March 2014; Interview with various members of the Association Yagour and Association Tamaynut, Tighedouine, 1 March 2014.
13. Interview with a member of both the Association Yagour and Association Tamaynut, Tighedouine, 1 March 2014.
14. Interview with a member of AMDH branch in Ait Ourir. Ait Ourir, 1 March 2014.
15. Interview with a member of the local branch of the Association Tamaynut, Tighedouine, 1 March 2014.

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