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REPRESENTATIONS
OF DEPRIVATION, AUTHORITY AND THE CITY:
A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS APPROACH
TO AN ASPECT OF HOUSING POLICY IN NORTH AFRICA

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Thesis submitted to satisfy the requirements of the degree of PhD by
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ABSTRACT

In Tunisia, (North Africa), housing is an issue on the State agenda, as are social inequalities. Both became important in 1990s Tunisia, with social divisions becoming marked as the economy opened up. The present dissertation aims to improve understanding of Tunisian social policy by posing the question of difference, representation and the discursive presence of policy. The study focuses on one aspect of housing provision for the disadvantaged. With respect to multi-occupancy in a downtown area, a coherent problem emerges in planning documents and the media, while other claims and interests disappear from the public domain. The present dissertation attempts to follow how this ‘disappearance’ takes place.

Drawing on sociolinguistics and critical discourse analysis, I examine the varying discourses and representations in circulation. The Oukala Project, the clearance of the unsafest multi-occupancy dwellings in the old city or médina of Tunis, depends on a specific construction of the relationship between State and society. I also pay attention to professional cultures and institutional context, crucial to what can be said and what must be left unsaid. A rupture between written word and lifeworld emerges, with the Oukala Project figuring as an ideal and effective solution to a deep rooted problem – within the limits of a neo-patriarchal discursive formation.

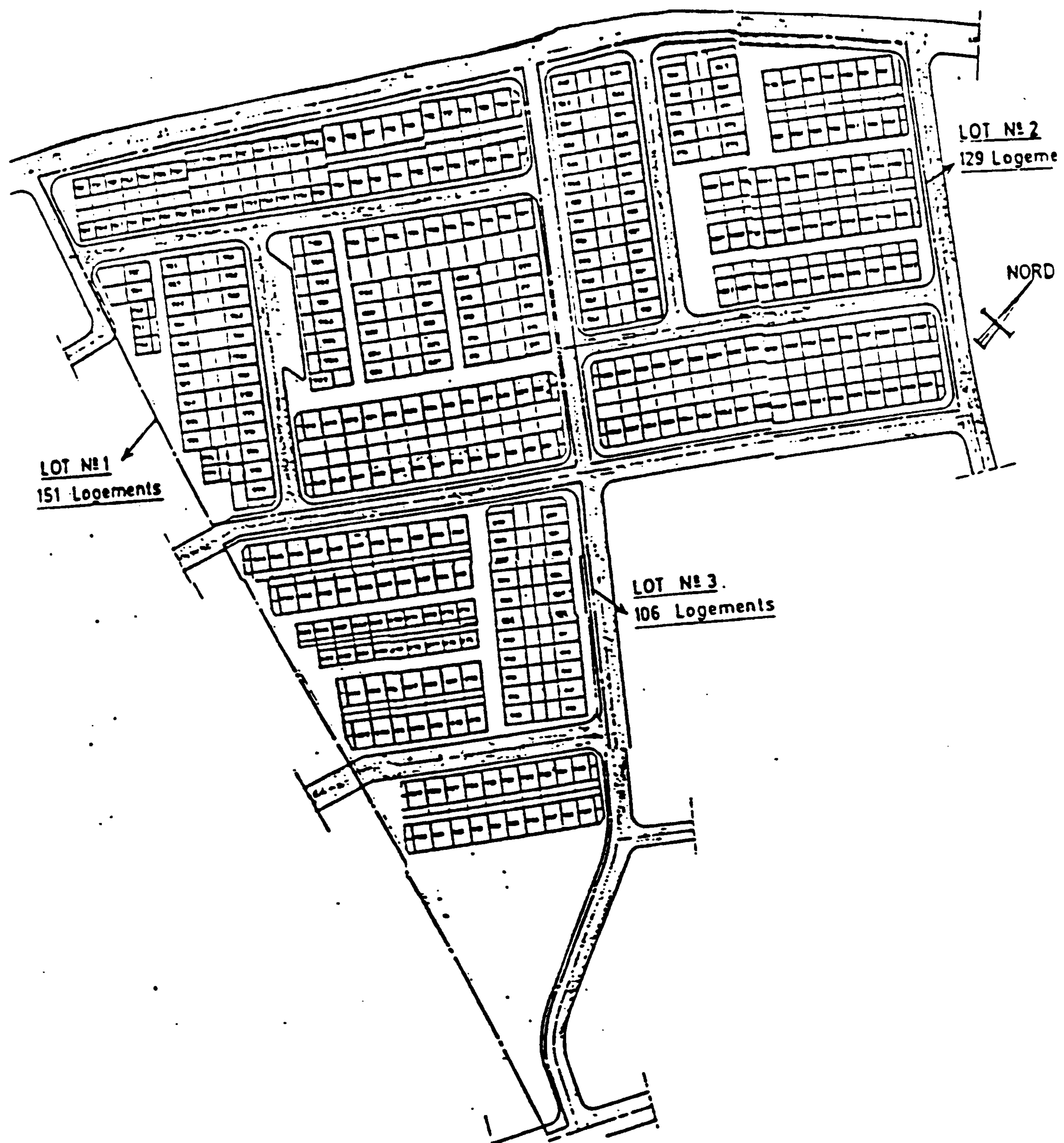
The representation of issues – and hence their treatment – is thus closely tied to socially created limits placed upon expression and action. In Tunisia, the strongly differentiated linguistic resources available to social agents reinforce these boundaries – and the apparent hegemony of the State. But ultimately, the research also shows the discursive mask of State hegemony to be strongly challenged, by both professionals and the rehoused people. Neo-patriarchy limits expression in the public domain – but challenges can still be expressed through other channels within the system.

A l'oukala du Nègre - ainsi dénommé parce que le propriétaire, d'un brun foncé, a les cheveux crépus et de grosses lèvres - les hommes sont déjà de retour. Les oukalas - si vous l'ignorez - sont les palais de la vieille Hara. Amas de petits cubes sans fenêtres encadrant un vaste patio sur quoi ils prennent jour. Chacun est occupé par une famille, souvent de plus de huit personnes. Dieu bénit avec largesse les mariages juifs. A tous le patio dispense lumière crue, eau fangeuse, air alourdi de l'odeur des détritux amoncelés.

Ryvel, alias Raphaël Lévy (1931 / 1981) *L'enfant de l'oukala et autres contes du ghetto*

Tunis: Ed. Bouslama (republished 1981, Paris: J.-C. Lattès, p.33)

The men are already back at the *Oukala du Nègre*, so called because the dark-skinned owner has crinkly hair and thick lips. Unless you are unaware of the fact, the oukalas are the palaces of the old Hara. A mass of small windowless cubes surrounding a vast patio from which they draw daylight. Each one is occupied by a family, often of more than eight people. God blesses Jewish couples generously. To all the patio dispenses raw light, muddy water and air heavy with the smell of piled-up rubbish.



حي خالد ابن الوليد

Frontispiece: street map of the Khaled Ibn El Walid Estate, Douar Hicher, western suburbs of Tunis (1991-92) (source: Municipality of Tunis (1995) *The Oukala Project: results and future horizons* Tunis: Municipality of Tunis)

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IN NORTH AFRICA**

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REPRESENTATIONS OF POVERTY, AUTHORITY AND THE CITY: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS APPROACH TO AN ASPECT OF HOUSING POLICY IN NORTH AFRICA

Introduction

The present thesis, which took as its main focus an aspect of late twentieth century social housing policy in Tunisia, a small North African country, was written in a British academic context. It brings together a number of areas of academic and empirical themes which have interested me since the late 1980s. Some of these themes began to take shape in an MA dissertation on urban conservation in Tunis researched in the early 1990s. The main theoretical interest, discourse analysis, belongs to an area of research which expanded considerably in British universities in the 1990s. There is an intellectual debt to the writings of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. In this research, using a discourse analysis approach, I have tried to examine the peculiar structures of representation characterising policy in Tunisia, undertaking a re-reading of contemporary press writing and official documents. This textual analysis is set against textual work of another kind, representations of housing policy from the actual residents concerned, structured by my outsider's anthropological gaze. I subsequently reach conclusions about the usefulness of discourse analysis and the nature of policy and power in the contemporary Tunisian state, about the development and presence of discourses making the professional activity of planners powerful and acceptable.

It goes without saying that this thesis, produced from such a diverse range of material, the vast majority of it unfamiliar to an Anglophone academic public, requires some initial background. This I give in the first chapters of the thesis. Here in this introduction, I provide rapid presentations of the policy issue (slum clearance and rehousing), the context (contemporary Tunisia and the city of Tunis), the communities researched (professional planners and poor inner urban residents), and the rationale and sources for the study (press

and document corpora; field interviews). I also provide an overview of argument and conclusions, and provide a chapter by chapter breakdown of the thesis. The introduction is completed by a short note on terminology and acronyms.

The issue: slum clearance and rehousing

The housing crisis is an issue which most states have to face at different stages of development, and the social segregation resulting from attempts to provide decent housing for all is an issue which has been widely researched in Europe and elsewhere. Housing is an issue on the Tunisian government agenda, as are the inequalities in Tunisian society. The latter issue is of particular importance in the context of Tunisia in the 1990s, as divisions in society, the gap between the poorest and the richest, would appear to be becoming more marked. There have been a number of recent studies on the built environment and housing in Tunisia, and one of the aims of the present dissertation is to improve understanding of the way the Tunisian state operates in this field by posing the question of difference, representation and the discursive presence of policy. Very little research of this kind has been done on Tunisia, and as such, the present dissertation is something of a first, using a mixed approach (as will be seen below) to a major policy issue.

The present study focuses on one aspect of housing provision for the disadvantaged. With respect to multi-occupancy in a downtown area, a coherent problem emerges in the media, while other claims and interests disappear from the public domain. One of the themes of the present dissertation is to follow how this 'disappearance' takes place in discursive terms. These are terms which imply my commitment to researching policy with attention to dominance and exclusion.

The context: contemporary Tunisia and the city of Tunis

The research was undertaken in the city of Tunis, a town which I had first come to know in 1985 as a lecturer at the University of Tunis. The mid-1980s were a period of crisis in the history of Tunisia, a central Mediterranean Arab country which had become independent from France in 1956. A change of régime was in store: President Bourguiba, leader of the country's independence movement and 'father of the nation', was basically senile, and was removed from power by his then prime minister, Zine el Abidine Ben Ali, in November 1987. A few words are necessary here on the political context of this small republic where I conducted my research in the 1990s.

Contemporary Tunisia: emergence of a 'policy style'

Tunisian political life since independence has shown a remarkable degree of stability, notably in terms of the direction and application of policy. In Tunisia, as in neighbouring Libya, the political leadership, right from independence, has always followed the line that the improvement of the majority's living conditions was the way forward. Education and health, infrastructure and housing, and in recent years, leisure facilities have always been the focus for investment. (The army, which in both Morocco and Algeria, for different reasons, absorbed large amounts of state finance, has always been a negligible factor). The result has been the creation of an educated work force, able to satisfy the needs of relocating European manufacturing industry. Islamic fundamentalism has little attraction for this large and stable group in society, content to work and enjoy the prosperity brought by the policies of the technocratic élite.

Under Bourguiba, there was little room for public debate on the policy line adopted by the government. He had himself referred to as *al Mujahid al Akbar*, translated into French as *le Suprême Combattant*. In Arabic, the term carries a hint of *jihad* or holy war. Bourguiba considered himself to be leading a *jihad* against ignorance and poverty; only the application of reason could bring about development and well-being. The leadership

style was paternalist, to say the least. The National Assembly essentially functioned as a forum for announcing decisions already taken at presidential level, the country was run by a growing body of university graduates who supported the modernising policies of the Bourguiba's prime ministers because they were a product of them. The improvement in living conditions was apparent to all.

But the 'Bourguiba system' also had a very personal, and often flamboyant touch. The Tunisian people came to know all the details of their president's life, the influence of his mother, the oft-declared poverty of his childhood. And then there was the issue of the succession. A succession of prime ministers were groomed to take over. They would be raised to dizzy heights by Bourguiba. And then, when things began to go wrong, for whatever reason, political or economic, they were disgraced and unceremoniously removed from office. The rise and spectacular downfall of Tunisia's prime ministers were part of a saga that kept Tunisia, and in particular the chattering classes, entertained for decades. And then in 1987, when things had finally got seriously out of hand in both political and economic terms, Bourguiba himself, basically senile and unfit for office, was removed by prime minister Ben Ali (see above).

Under Ben Ali, the leadership *style* altered radically. Speculation about manoeuvrings for influence in the Carthage Palace disappeared. Sobre-suited President Ben Ali, surrounded by a team of steady technocrats, is a discrete figure. Gone is the flamboyant rhetoric, quiet efficiency is the order of the day. The main policy options, (continued economic development and highly publicised concern for the well-being of low-income groups), are broadly the same. While Bourguiba came from a family of upwardly mobile landowners from the Sahel region, Ben Ali had a more difficult start in life - hence the interest in improving conditions for the poorest members of society. Outside official State occasions, the President's visits to remote regions or poor urban areas attract the most media coverage. Immediate improvements are seen to follow these visits. The question of Ben Ali's successor remains on hold, however. In 1990s Tunisia, stability was the watchword

in public life. Given the state of the country's neighbours, it was in nobody's interest to rock the boat.

The city of Tunis in the 1990s: deepening socio-economic divisions

My first year in Tunis, in the mid-1980s, was spent living in the city centre. I later moved to a coastal village, Sidi Bou Saïd, which I left in the early 1990s as rents rose in the increasingly gentrified area. The fieldwork for the dissertation was undertaken while based in the old city or médina at the centre of Greater Tunis, very much an area of mixed and often conflicting property use. The Médina has the variety of buildings one would expect in a Mediterranean city with a long and interesting history - hence the growing interest of professional groups.¹

The Médina of Tunis is today the historic centre of an urban area with a population of some 1.5 million. It became capital of a regional Muslim statelet in the late ninth century. The present layout of the central areas, a dense mass of courtyard buildings served by narrow streets, goes back to the late Middle Ages. Much of the finest building still extant dates back to the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Domestic building earlier than this is rare. However, it is because Tunis is felt to represent 'Arab-Muslim urban fabric' that it is considered worthy of preservation.

In the nineteenth century, a modern town on a gridiron pattern grew up next to the Médina on reclaimed land. Simple apartment blocks were put up in the eastern parts of the Médina, close to the European consulates, to house an incoming population of Italians and Maltese. After Tunisia became a French protectorate in 1881, the development of the new town speeded up. New models for domestic housing appeared, including Haussman-style apartment buildings and villas. Originally intended for a European population, in the

¹ I had already done work on heritage conservation in Tunis when I started work on the present dissertation. See my unpublished MA dissertation, McGuinness, Justin (1993) *The development of conservation management for a pre-industrial North African city: the case of the Médina of Tunis* University of Durham, Faculty of Social Sciences

1930s, the housing of the new Tunis proved attractive to the increasingly prosperous Tunisian Jewish population and a westernised fringe of the Muslim population. By the 1950s, the 270 ha area today referred to as the Médina had a population which was highly mixed in both ethnic and social terms.

Independence brought about huge changes in the ethnic composition of the city. Along with the French and longer established Italian populations, the Tunisian Jews were forced out. Large amounts of prime property were available cheaply in the modern areas, and the opportunities were quickly seized by Tunis' Muslim residents. Some property was distributed to reward clients of the ruling Neo-Destour Party. In the 1960s, empty property in the eastern, once mainly European sectors of the Médina was quickly filled by poor rural migrants. The multiple-occupancy problem, which had already existed in the poor Jewish areas in the 1930s, spread to the rest of the old town.

In the 1960s, the Médina developed a reputation as a place of poverty and petty criminality. After riots following the mismanaged demolition of some homes in the mid-1960s, the Municipality realised that it had a problematic population about which it knew very little living at the heart of the city. In 1969, a special agency, the Association Sauvegarde de la Médina (ASM), was set up to undertake research into the Médina and suggest solutions for its problems. The issue of multi-occupancy dwellings, referred to as *oukalas* in local parlance, was one of the areas examined. Based around the ASM and the Municipality, a group of technical experts, essentially architects, were to put forward solutions for resolving the Médina's *taudification* or transformation of its buildings into slum accommodation.

To widen the focus, by the time this study was undertaken in the 1990s, Tunis was a city of increasingly marked socio-economic divisions. Simplifying heavily, the poor have opted en masse for self-build housing on former agricultural land to the west. For the stable, salaried middle classes, there is a hierarchy of suburbs to choose from, with El Menzah and El Manar north of the city centre preferred to the southern suburbs. This

category can opt for developer-built accommodation in the northern areas, or else buy serviced land for private villa development. Old money prefers the northern coastal suburbs. In the second half of the 1990s, the Médina still had a large number of the most precarious families, and certain areas still kept their reputation for criminality and poverty. Incipient gentrification was observable close to the Kasbah area.

The project researched: multi-occupancy housing in old Tunis

The multioccupancy issue was first identified in central Tunis back in the 1930s, when the main population concerned was the poorest, least educated section of the Jewish community. The term used for a multi-occupancy dwelling was (and still is) *oukala*. The issue was further investigated by the ASM in the 1970s and the 1980s without any wide-reaching action being taken. In the meantime, the most able households found solutions to their housing problems: they left the Médina for self-build or State self-built homes elsewhere, generally on the western edge of Tunis. By the late 1980s, the families left in the Médina would seem to have been the most vulnerable, i.e. families with irregular sources of income, single parent households, etc.

The issue came to the fore in 1990, when the President of the Republic visited two oukalas in the Médina. Under presidential supervision (pressure?), a committee was put together which was eventually headed by the Mayor of Tunis. (The project to rehouse the families was to be an occasion for the Municipality to show its technical competence). Funding and land was made available, and 1,200 families were rehoused on three new estates in the western suburbs. The final phase of the rehousing was complete by 1996. In the late-1990s, a 'home loans for upgrading works' programme was set up. The term Oukala Project (*le Projet Oukala*) came to be used to refer to both the rehousing and the newer loans for improvements programme, despite the very different populations targeted. The present dissertation is concerned with what can now, from a late-1990s standpoint, be seen as the first half of the project. It also represents part of the wider changes taking place in central Tunis, part of the oft-trumpeted 'return to the centre.'

The communities researched: professional planners and poor inner urban residents

My research project was to focus on two main groups, a community of technical experts, and a more diverse population of rehoused inner urban residents. The discourse of the former group I tackled in two ways, through interview and an analysis of its written production, its main form of communication with its political backers. The former Médina residents I tackled through interview, mainly conducted at their homes on the new rehousing estates on the western edge of the city. There are no independently produced written documents recording what city residents think of their housing. The interviewing was conducted in 1996 and 1997. A range of languages were used, French predominating in discussions with the professional group, spoken Tunisian Arabic with the rehousees.

The group I refer to as 'professional planners' was based in three organisations: the ASM de Tunis, the ARRU (Agence de rénovation et de réhabilitation urbaine) and the Municipality of Tunis. This selection of professionals fully or partly involved with the *oukala* rehousing project included architects, municipal employees, para-medical personnel and social workers. Although on occasion guarded in their comments, they were generally critical of the way the slum clearance and rehousing operation was handled. I also spoke with planning professionals who had been involved with the Médina and its problems at an early stage of their career. This last group was particularly forthcoming in terms of criticising the Oukala Project.

The 'rehousees' from the city centre were generally unrestrained in their comments. I soon found that no-one from the planning establishment was willing to accompany me in my visits to the new estates to which former *oukala* residents were decanted during the 1990s. I thus established contact by visiting the estates by myself. Residents proved willing and generally keen to talk, and I had discussions with a wide range of people, of all ages, who were very generous with their time, and patient with my questioning.

The result of my information gathering, which first started in the early 1990s when I had no idea that I would focus on the multi-occupancy issue, was a diverse corpus of field notes, reports and technical documents, and press coverage. I had to somehow organise this material. A proper introduction implies a discussion of my rationale, presenting my decision to depart from the accepted ways of looking at the city in the Tunisian academic community.

The rationale and sources for the study

There is little academic writing on the city of Tunis, and none of it could be said to challenge the status quo in any way. In the recent studies, the best of which is Jellal Abdelkafi's *La Médina de Tunis, espace historique*², the focus is on the teleological progression of the city towards its current status as national capital. In the case of Abdelkafi's work, there is a clear intent to relate urban development to the activities of the State. Focusing on one small area of urban policy, I sought to continue along these lines. In view of my rather heterogeneous material, my goal became that of providing a new interpretative approach combining analysis of different discourses of and from the city. I wanted to highlight questions of social segregation, language and the power of naming, and the uses of professional knowledge - all of this in the light of official power to impose a given set of acceptable representations of authority, poverty and the city.

My sources were a personally constructed discursive archive, put together from - and with the help of - the communities mentioned above. Just as important as the press and document archives were 'the voices from the city', telling of the rehoused people's experience. There are few oral histories of Tunis. I thus sought to give something of the experience of being rehoused. The result was a very different representation from that advanced in the official media. I am well aware, however, that there are difficulties in using these fragments of life as source material. The interviews with rehoused people - and I had discussions with easily a hundred people - can not be considered a wholly

² Abdelkafi, Jellal (1986) *La Médina de Tunis, espace historique* Paris: CNRS

representative sample. But then what is lost in terms of generalities is more than made up for in fine grain detail about the rehousing process.

Methodology

As is apparent from this brief rundown of the sources of the study, I was faced with a rich if rather sprawling selection of material, an archive that told an interesting story if only I could draw the different strands together. There were what appeared, from a western perspective, as holes in this archive too. There were no written documents produced by rehousee community members, few 'authored' news articles - unsurprising in the Tunisian media context.

For many years, in fact I had been interested in the press presentation of issues. For western students of Arab culture, the treatment of information in Arabic press reporting is immediately striking. (In my case, critical analysis of these codes led me to a more critical awareness of western reporting styles). In my readings into socio-linguistics, I found that there was much work on the press treatment of various issues - on racism, immigration and themes like the Gulf War. However, there appeared to be few studies where an issue was looked out in terms of all the different discourses in circulation.

Thus, drawing on the tools of the socio-linguistic tradition which has become known as critical discourse analysis or CDA in English, I attempted to examine the discourses surrounding the Médina slum / rehousing issue, looking at both text and image, in short, at the representations present. The question which I was asking, in methodological terms, was 'what actually is the value of doing in depth analysis of words and images present in documents and people's reflections noted and collated.

I had not chosen an easy option, it has to be said. In the event, my formal CDA had to be restricted to the written part of the 'oukala archive', namely the two corpora, the planning documents and the press articles. These corpora range over two written languages.

Although the analysis of the press corpus, with its photographs and public events, seemed easier to deal with, the analysis of the more heterogeneous document archive, spanning as it did nearly three decades, proved just as interesting. A real story of a changing professional relationship to the state's intervention emerged.

So what actually did I do with the two corpora? How did CDA work for me? (Would it be useful for other researchers approaching urban policy issues?). Basically, critical discourse analysis as used here goes into the detailed linguistic and iconographic mechanisms of text in two languages, French and Arabic. French dominates in the first, technical corpus, there is an even Arabic / French split in the second, media corpus. A broadly similar approach is adopted to the two corpora, although because of the nature of the texts, an identical formulaic approach would not have allowed me to reveal the particularities of the two types as easily.

In both cases, I examine the keywords used to represent the issue. I look at the ways the texts work to produce a convincing standpoint - and the main methods brought into play to do this. In the technical corpus, the use of figures is on salient feature, as is the impersonal tone, the removal of all indication of the presence of the individual with opinions. In detail, I examine a form of technical discourse which appeared towards the mid-1990s, the institutional press, through which the planning professionals position is communicated to a wider public than in the technical reports. With respect to the press corpus, I undertake a detailed analysis of headlines and images present in the press articles providing information on the oukala issue. I look at the social actors involved. In contrast to the first corpus, easily identifiable figures are present. I look at the way rehousees opinions are presented, and the manipulation of figures and expert opinion. Finally, the final part of my formal discourse analysis looks at the way the oukala story fits into the symbolic environment of the Tunisian nation, through a detailed examination of one specific event. Here, all the above elements of CDA are brought together to produce a picture of the visual and textual elements in the format deemed suitable for the presentation of policy by the Tunisian state apparatus. The style is heavily neo-patriarchal.

To complement my analysis of the mechanics by which these policy rhetorics seek to become convincing, I went to talk with people directly concerned by the oukala project. As I was unable, for reasons explained in the thesis (the sensitive political situation, people's worries about 'going on record'), to tape people's words, detailed linguistic CDA of a formalist kind was impossible. Hence the second major methodological strand in this thesis, the field interview. Through discussions with those concerned, I was able to build up a picture of the most powerful images circulating of the rehousing project. I looked at 'words from the city', everyday representations of policy as seen from the user end. This provided me with a powerful contrasting view of the suburban solution for the oukala people. Methodologically, I felt that this approach was an effective foil to the constraints of formal CDA. The combination of these two approaches, as far as I know, had not been used to look at policy in a North African (or Middle Eastern, for that matter) state.

So to recapitulate, for the present dissertation, I chose to research a specific sub-field of housing and urban policy. The term 'policy' is taken as the discursive and real practice through which the State seeks to tackle the question of its legitimacy. Through the detailed analysis of text and image, and from the study of micro-narratives, fragments of everyday life, I seek to reach an understanding of the workings of the policy process in a Mediterranean Arab state. An underlying methodological question is how the plurality of representations clustering around a given issue can be approached: I draw on two main methodological strands - sociolinguistic analysis and the field interview.

But what then is the main line of argument followed here regarding discourse and the State?

The argument

In historical terms, my argument is based on the premise that contemporary Tunisian state practice has deep roots: the policy discourse of *solidarité* or *tadhamun*, although derived from the French republican tradition, also relates to Islamic discourses of the charismatic leader, defender of religion; provided that the tenets of faith are respected, there is no reason to question State practice.

The main argument of the dissertation is that the way problems of deprivation are represented and tackled is closely tied to socially created limits placed upon expression and action. In the Tunisian case, the strongly differentiated linguistic resources available to social agents reinforce these boundaries. In theoretical terms, I base my argument on a number of starting points including the debate on the nature of the state in the Arab world and issues of language, image and representations "through which social agents imagine the divisions of reality and which contribute to the reality of divisions".³

The Oukala Project, the operation to clear the unsafest multioccupancy dwellings from the Médina of Tunis, my argument runs, depends upon a specific construction of the relationship between State and society. In analysing the words and images of policy documents and the media, I also pay attention to professional cultures and institutional context, so important for what can be said and what must be left unsaid. The Oukala Project may thus figure as an ideal and effective solution to a deep rooted problem. However, as Hajer⁴ puts it, "Policy making is not just a matter of finding acceptable solutions for preconceived problems. It is also the dominant way in which modern societies regulate latent social conflicts."

³ Bourdieu, Pierre (1991) *Language and Symbolic Power* (with an introduction by J.B. Thompson) Cambridge: Polity Press, p.226

⁴ Hajer, Maarten (1995) *The Politics of Environmental Discourse: ecological modernization and the policy process* Oxford: Clarendon Press

Conclusions

The theoretical discussion on the formulation, representation and practice of State policy, the improvement of the physical, domestic environment as the main way of conceptualising the problems of poverty and exclusion raises a whole chain of questions: to what extent do individual actors have any impact on the policy process? can this form of urban project, displacing hundreds of families, driven through chiefly by a political programme, be viewed from the angle of the debate on the 'neopatriarchal' workings of the contemporary Arab state? what room is there for learning within the policy process? at what point do more critical, reflexive forms of policy discourse emerge? These are questions which for the most part are beyond the scope of the present dissertation. Nevertheless, from textual analysis and interview, it emerges that there is a very clear link between what I term the 'discursive environment' and the style of policy delivery.

The combination of discourse analysis and interview has allowed me to explore social exclusion through housing and locality. Drawing from critical linguistics and social anthropology has helped me to focus on the representational, the symbolic side of policy, but also helped reveal what one might term, following Michel Foucault, an aspect of the micro-physics of power at work in Tunisia, the ebb and flow of command and consent between groups in society. I cannot claim that my account of slum clearance in central Tunis provides anything more than an indication of how the Tunisian State works. Nevertheless, I feel that this perspective on State policy, with its sociolinguistic, representational focus, is preferable to viewing an Arab polity from the essentialising viewpoint taken by the theorists of 'neopatriarchy', a concept which is attractive in its simplicity, but ultimately unable to account for the nuances of the local.

Chapter outlines

Having introduced the main themes and concerns of the thesis, there follows an overview of the work on a chapter basis, to enable the reader to go directly to areas of interest, as necessary.

Chapter 1 discusses the views of language and sociolinguistic research informing the present dissertation. Following Pierre Bourdieu, language is seen as 'a variable social phenomenon, competences in which are socially defined, unevenly distributed and valorised, and rooted in hierarchically structured communicative contexts.'⁵ The chapter goes on to sketch in the background to the Tunisian 'linguistic market'. During the research process, I became experienced in the codes of this market, and was often called upon to reflect on the nature of linguistic competence.

The academic research practice referred to as discourse analysis, which shades off in critical language study (CLS) and critical discourse analysis (CDA) has developed considerably since the late 1980s, and has come to cover a wide range of techniques and approaches which range from attempts to operationalize parts of the work of Michel Foucault to the detailed study of conversational interaction. In terms of policy analysis and discourse, Maarten Hajer's 1995 book *The politics of environmental discourse* is of particular interest. With this in mind, **Chapter 2** thus provides an account of CDA, the background theory to the dissertation, reviewing areas of focus and certain critiques.

Chapter 3 moves into greater detail, examining a number of recent pieces of discourse analytic work, and from these perspectives develops a framework for the analysis of Tunisian media discourse. Among the major authors discussed are Hodge and Kress on

⁵ Jenkin, R. (1991) *Pierre Bourdieu* London: Routledge (key sociologists series)

language as ideology⁶ and de Goede⁷ and Brooke⁸ for their work on news analysis, and Meinhof, Richardson et al⁹ on representations of poverty in Britain.

Obviously there is a need to take into account the society in which the objects of analysis are constructed, produced and received, and **Chapter 4**, 'The discourse context', deals with the socio-historical background to the substantive policy field. The discursive practices of the Tunisian State are outlined, the area of urban policy discussed along with the evolution of the Oukala Project.

Chapter 5 focuses on two samples of the discursive output of the State, namely a first corpus housing and planning documents relative to the Oukala Project, and a second corpus of newspaper articles presenting the project. The 'planning corpus' is dealt with in section 5.2, and the analysis shows some interesting developments in the treatment of the multi-occupancy issue in the documents produced by built-environment professionals.

The newspaper corpus, analysed in section 5.3, comprises feature and chronicle pieces as well as editorials collected between 1990 and 1996, representing a comprehensive sample of print-media coverage of the project. Attention is paid to the interplay of visual and verbal forms in the process of representing deprivation, policy and authority. Through close examination of media texts, I explore the ideological premises of State policy. Images and text argue for the improvement of society, arousing sympathy for poor inner urban dwellers and portraying a concerned, dutiful President of the Republic as the fount of all decision and action. An inclusive vision of a homogeneous, national community

⁶ Hodge, R. and Kress, G. (1979, 1993) *Language and Ideology* London: Routledge

⁷ de Goede, Marieke (1996) 'Ideology in the US welfare debate: neo-liberal representations of poverty' in *Discourse and Society* 7 (3) pp.317-357

⁸ Brookes, Heather Jean (1995) "'Suit, tie and a touch of juju" – the ideological construction of Africa: a critical discourse analysis of news on Africa in the British press' in *Discourse and Society* 6 (4) pp.461-494

⁹ Meinhof, Ulrike H. and Richardson, K. (eds) (1994) *Text, Discourse and Context – representations of poverty in Britain* London: Longman

working together for the development of the nation underpins this press discourse. Following van Dijk, I see media reporting as establishing '... the general outline of social, political, cultural and economic models of societal events'.¹⁰ The underlying question, however, is why this news narrative turns out as it does. News of this kind clearly has to conform with a certain pattern expected in Tunisian society.

The example of this particular slum clearance / rehousing project was not picked at random. Firstly, I had a certain knowledge of the issues through an earlier research project on the Médina, the old city of Tunis where the majority of the multi-occupancy dwellings were located. Secondly, the Oukala Project stood out in terms of media coverage. In a context where democratic political activity and press freedom is severely limited, such projects with highly visible impact can function to raise the profile of the State. The clearance of the slums and the provision of new housing can be seen as a metaphor for effective State action.

But the Oukala Project is an interesting case because, aside from the clear-cut message of the media coverage, it could only but raise areas of conflict. If the press discourse seems sure of its 'ownership' of the truth, discussions with planners, social workers and rehousees revealed more nuanced and contradicting versions of the story.

These alternative versions are the focus of **Chapter 6**, which brings into play some of the actors directly concerned with the project. Here language constitutes a rather different set of representations of rehousees and the city. The oukalas and the new housing areas, palpable policy targets in the press and policy documents, emerge as the settings for real lives, the background to careers, both political and professional. In chapter 6, through a series of thematic sub-sections, I try to write my way to an understanding of the Oukala Project, aware of my position as a researcher sifting through multiple accounts, multiple representations of an essentially top-down home displacement operation. A certain control is surrendered by me here - although only to a limited extent. The researcher is

¹⁰ van Dijk, T.A. (1988) *News as Discourse* Hillsdale, N.J.:Erlbaum, p.182

obliged to code and order the interview material, at the risk of being overselective and excluding information to slant the argument one way or the other. However, hope to have revealed the power relations at work, who shapes the description of the problem.

Through tackling unsafe, unhealthy housing, the Tunisian State portrays itself as capable of achieving policy objectives to improve the lot of the underprivileged. (In the light of fundamentalist uprisings and violence in neighbouring Algeria, perhaps the policy is best viewed as a variation on the theme of mollifying the potentially dangerous poor.) Yet as interviews revealed, the State's response to the physical side of the problem was only a partial solution. The families and individuals concerned often faced multiple problems - issues which never found their way into policy documents and only rarely into the press.

Chapter 7 'On methodology and paternalist policy', draws together substantive and theoretical conclusions. 'The suburban solution?' (7.1) highlights the problems facing the estates. I argue that the multiple issues facing poor urban dwellers should be recognised in policy. Urban deprivation defined on the basis of multi-occupancy and unsafe building is one possible representation of the issue, one discursive problem. While the journalists "observe the form and formalities of [their] field" (Thompson 1991: 20), while planners and municipal employees follow procedure and process potential rehousees, other modes of representation with different focuses circulate in the city, unable to find their way to printed form and wider diffusion.

'From Médina to media, representations of policy and poverty' (7.2), evaluates the contribution of discourse analysis to analysing a policy issue like housing disadvantage. Certainly, the linguistic analysis of text does allow the researcher to demonstrate the mechanics of representation, how certain actors are excluded. I conclude however that the methodology is only useful with wide-ranging comment on context, both textual and real-world. Discourse analysis is thus a useful, complementary set of tools to getting at how relations of domination are maintained.

Sub-section 7.3, 'Myth, hegemony and neopatriarchy' situates the dissertation in the debates on hegemony and neopatriarchy. I attempt to evaluate the contribution of research of this kind to an understanding of the Tunisian polity, and perhaps to southern Mediterranean Arab societies in general. The use of a combination of critical discourse analysis of text and fieldwork can shed light on the symbolic presence of urban policy, revealing the limits placed on public expression and the dense web of interpersonal relations created in the implementation of policy. Personal relations emerged as being of considerable importance in this particular policy initiative, inevitably given the place of the individual home as the locus of family reproduction. In the press accounts there is just one account of a form of socio-spatial exclusion, as for the moment the State is unable to let other voices emerge in the public domain. Behind the official representations of poverty, authority and policy, are multiple voices and images from across the city, engaged in a dialogue with the dominant forces, challenging the neopatriarchal hegemony established in written text. As Jane Flax¹¹ suggests:

Perhaps reality can have 'a' structure only from the falsely universalizing perspective of the dominant group. That is, only to the extent that one person or group can dominate the whole will reality appear to be governed by one set of rules or to be constituted by one privileged set of social relations.

Risks and perspectives

Getting to know - and then analysing and writing on a society very different from one's own is a task fraught with dangers. Western anthropologists working earlier this century could work with small, often isolated social units. But as Hylland-Eriksen¹² notes, today it is difficult for a researcher "to develop an overview of the entire social universe."

Researcher must be aware of shifting perceptions and attitudes across sprawling cities

¹¹ quoted in Linda Nicholson in Linda, N. (ed) (1990) *Feminism / Postmodernism* London: Routledge p.6

¹² Hylland-Eriksen, Thomas (1995) *Small Places, Large Issues. An introduction to social and cultural anthropology* London: Pluto Press, p.236

where contacts are maintained across the world. My ultimately rather focused data has attempted to show how language and image constituted representations of poverty and privilege tie in with policy positions and different groups premises about their society. By shedding light on the workings of symbolic media politics, the traditional and 'rational' symbols drawn upon by the Tunisian State to draw the population into its all-inclusive republican consensus, it may just be possible to open the way for a more critically informed, 'listening' type of policy practice. Metaphors of 'community development' and 'empowerment' are already circulating in Tunisian NGOs: the challenge would be to ensure that future policy discourses, based on new sets of representations of disadvantage, bring dialogue to official knowledge, making possible a more nuanced, individual basis for action.

Justin McGuinness

Marrakech and London, April/May 1999

Note on terminology and acronyms

The Tunisian Arabic term *oukala*, derived from the Standard Arabic *wikala*, (meaning ‘agency’), signifies a multi-occupancy dwelling in the older parts of Tunis. Until the 1960s, the term essentially referred to rooming houses in old Tunis. Later, in the early 1970s, the term came to be used by professional planners and housing experts as shorthand to designate unsafe, overcrowded accommodation in the older, central parts of the city.

The following acronyms figure frequently in the text:

ARRU – Agence de rénovation et de réhabilitation urbaine

ASM – Association Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis

FADES – Fonds arabe pour le développement économique et social

FNAH – Fonds national pour l’amélioration de l’habitat

FNS – Fonds national de solidarité

MEH – Ministère de l’environnement et de l’habitat

1

BACKGROUND THEORY: ON LANGUAGE AS SOCIAL PRACTICE AND DOING SOCIAL RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction: *maison minima*

Consider then the postcard views of the Médina of Tunis at the beginning of this century. This was a city of contrasts: the buildings are often tumbledown, weeds sprout on the terraces, a fig tree grows picturesquely out of a wall. Seen from afar, the city was an expanse of low, flatroofed buildings, with here and there a minaret, and towards the northern sector, the great whitewashed cupolas of Sidi Mehrez. But already the new, European Tunis was taking shape. Splendid stucco apartment buildings presaged new ways of life, new comforts, taken up by the wealthy urban gentry of Tunis from the 1930s. As described by Jacques Berque¹, the members of this class which had lived enclosed within a city devoted to craft, trade and study, felt unable to adapt to the modern world in the confines of their palaces - ill suited as these buildings were to the new ways.

With the gradual departure of the urban gentry, the Médina became refuge for the rural migrants seeking a foothold in the city. The population of old Tunis, an area stretching close on two miles from north to south, and about a mile across at its widest point, had climbed to 168,000 by 1956. The once fine houses were rented out room by room, extended families crowded into small apartments left by the departing Italians and Jewish Tunisians in the 1960s. The walls of the narrow streets were damp and peeling, the wide marble patios were divided with makeshift brick and concrete partitions. Galleries were filled with washing, cooking smells and the chatter of children. One water point and one WC was the norm for a houseful of families. The 1960s thus saw a vast expansion in multi-occupancy - the phenomenon which came to be referred to as *oukalisierung* by Tunisian planners from around the early 1970s: the Tunisois term *oukala*, a sort of hostel for tradesmen spending some time in the city, came to be a byword for any decaying, overcrowded rented property in the Médina. In the 1960s, grandiose projects were drawn up for the future of the Médina - none of which concerned its growing and recently arrived population, slowly

¹ Berque, Jacques (1962, third edition) *Le Maghreb entre deux guerres* Paris: Le Seuil / collection Esprit. See especially chapter II 'Fragments d'histoire locale', subsection IV, 'Quartiers', pp.200-231. Berque focuses on the rue du Pacha neighbourhood of the Médina of Tunis.

acculturating to the ways of the city. The Municipality of Tunis eventually woke up to the fact that it had an unknown underclass (to use a recently fashionable Anglo-Saxon term), in its midst, and in 1967 created a special planning body, the Association Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis, to survey and analyse the population of the Médina. With the reconstruction of the Hafsia site, in the mid to late 1970s, an exemplary housing project was realised, fitting neatly into the existing built fabric, and with the aim of rehousing some of the neighbourhood's multi-occupancy residents.

The Hafsia Project was not the first attempt to imagine ideal solutions to the problem of housing the urban poor in Tunisia. From 1943 to 1948, the French authorities undertook to reconstruct a country devastated by Axis and Allied armies, and launched an attempt to satisfy the needs of potentially restive local population. A team of architects looked to traditional rural housing for inspiration; the so-called Tunisian *maison minima*, a modular dwelling of vaulted rooms round a courtyard, seemed to offer a solution:

The rural house is already, most often, a house reduced to its most simple expression. The materials and labour required are easily organised, the layout is well adapted. [This house] more than is usually thought, satisfies the profound aspirations of those concerned who will only be too happy to have the means to replace their archaic huts. There is no need to look any further.²

Across Tunisia, the paternalist architects of the reconstruction period planned and built a scattering of ideal estates. For the Zehrfuss team, the message of whitewashed vaults and blind exterior façades was 'home' - for the deprived Muslim populations.

The challenge faced by these architects working in the 1940s remains essentially the same today: how to achieve high density housing without loss of family privacy, how to make low-budget homes part of a desirable, pleasant and practical environment, how to plan for groups least privileged in terms of their access to resources. In Tunisia, however, as in a number of other Mediterranean states, the vast majority of housing is self-built, without recourse to professionals, and is often constructed on unserviced land.

The present dissertation aims to contribute to the understanding of how the *maison minima*, accommodation for low-income groups is created in Tunisia, through an

² Rolland, Maxime (1950) 'La maison minima tunisienne' in *Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, 20, p.77

examination of a rehousing programme conducted jointly by the local and central State in the early to mid-1990s. At one level, the dissertation represents a preliminary evaluation of this Oukala Project, an operation to remove the worst multi-occupancy housing in central Tunis.

Many evaluations have been written on rehabilitation and upgrading poor neighbourhoods in the North African countries (notably for Egypt and Morocco). However, the originality of this dissertation lies (I hope) in its methodological focus. As far as I know, there is little other work which employs a mixed approach, combining a wide reading of text on policy with actual fieldwork. Thus the dissertation makes an interesting contribution to North African studies, anthropology and the new field of discourse analysis. I hope that it will prove useful to others seeking to develop critical approaches to policy in contexts where there is little tradition of open debate and public information.

I tackle the issue of sub-standard housing by detailed attention to the linguistic and iconographic resources deployed in texts produced about the oukala issue. Thus detailed background is given on the theoretical issues raised in doing socio-linguistic research in a foreign culture, as well as on the methodologies of discourse analysis. Present in the texts studied are seemingly simple representations of a policy initiative - representations which cannot be separated from the general political context and the interaction between social agents and local and central State institutions. Which leads me to the third area in which this dissertation aims to make a contribution.

Régimes like the post-colonial Tunisian government have often been qualified as neo-patriarchal - yet often with little detailed analysis of actual State practices. Although the implementation of the Oukala Project represents a significant departure in housing provision at local State level, it is the representations rather than the actual content of policy which I see as significant. Through a project aiming at the satisfaction of minimum housing needs, the Tunisian State establishes a persuasive narrative of successful action, thereby strengthening its moral hegemony. In the written texts examined, the degree of consensus and acquiescence is remarkable: conflict there is not in this neo-patriarchal realisation of State legitimacy. In a sense then I am attempting to see how a given myth retains its hold in the collective mind, developing a case study of a small group of linguistic signs: 'oukala', 'solidarity', 'the weak', 'the Artisan of the Change'. Nevertheless, the dominant narrative does not go unchallenged, as a series of micro-narratives analysed in the last major chapter reveal. Here the threads that run through actual discussions of the oukala issue are sorted and

placed to create another set of representations, of the key, real-life themes³ which emerged behind this most mediatised of projects.

An underlying interest in this dissertation, therefore, is the intermeshing of objective, technical evaluations of housing need and the subjective ways of dividing up the world as experienced - subjective approaches which are part of the reality of categorisations of all kinds. Bourdieu underlines the need to consider this very clearly, the necessity of understanding the links between objective classifications, whether acted out or represented and their practical relationship with the strategies of individuals and groups to put them to use for their material or symbolic interests, maintaining and changing them. Thus, following Bourdieu, in this study I am concerned with:

the objective relations of material and symbolic power, and the practical schemes (implicit, confused, and more or less contradictory) through which agents classify other agents and evaluate their position in these objective relations as well as the symbolic strategies of presentation and self-representation in which they oppose the classifications and representations (of themselves) that others impose on them.⁴

To draw on a metaphor from geography, Tunisian State discourse reduces the differences between people and places to a simplified 'map' of relationships linking leader and citizens, unsafe and fit housing. But beyond this mapping are a heterogeneous, varied set of practices, of agents working to construct their own lives in the city. This dissertation is therefore situated at the meeting place of the stories told by the State-controlled media and individual life histories.

However, based as it is on a multitude of perspectives, the dissertation is in effect a further, more wide-ranging construct of the oukala issue. I recognise this artificiality, and hope I have managed to take an open, subtle position which avoids creating heroes and villains from the characters in my data. I may not have been able to bring the arid world of the *note administrative* and the presentation report to life, but at least

³ Following Ely, M., Anzul, M. et al (1991) *Doing Qualitative Research: circles within circles* London: Falmer Press, p.150, the following definition of 'theme' seems particularly relevant: 'A theme can be defined as a statement of meaning that (1) runs through all or most of the pertinent data, or (2) one in the minority that carries heavy emotional or factual impact.'

⁴ Bourdieu, Pierre (1991) 'Identity and representation', p.227 in *Language and Symbolic Power* Cambridge: Polity Press, pp.220-228

I hope to have shed some light on the rhetorical workings of this vital part of any planned housing project - and its links with wider State-produced media discourse.

Clifford Geertz tells us that in anthropological work we need to 'convince our readers that we have actually penetrated (or been penetrated by) another form of life, of having, one way or another, truly "been there" '.⁵ I therefore begin with a look at issues of language, the key to 'being part of it', to communicating in a foreign society. Starting with the theoretical perspectives of Pierre Bourdieu on power and language, I move to a discussion of the complex socio-linguistic field in Tunisia and a reflection on the position of the researcher therein.

1.2 Linguistic habitus, linguistic market: the power of words in the work of Bourdieu

For Pierre Bourdieu, language cannot be analysed outside the cultural and societal conditions of its production and reception. This is the main theme of a selection of papers, translated and edited by John B. Thompson under the title *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991)⁶ In these papers, Bourdieu is essentially providing a critique of earlier, structuralist linguistic research, essentially Saussure and Chomsky. The linguistic models of these writers - the division between *langue* and *parole* for the former, between 'competence' and 'performance' for the latter depend upon the existence of an ideal structure of language (the work of grammarians), used in everyday life for our communicative needs.

Bourdieu, however, would agree with Benedict Anderson on the importance of standard languages in the constitution of nation states, and his interest in language and its role in the work of academics (*Homo Academicus*⁷) or the establishment of regional identity⁸ represents an attempt to span 'the division between linguistics and sociology [which] is unfortunate and deleterious to both disciplines.'⁹ In what

⁵ Geertz, Clifford (1988) *Works and Lives: the anthropologist as author* Cambridge: Polity Press, pp.4-5

⁶ Bourdieu, Pierre (1991) *Language and Symbolic Power* edited by John B. Thompson Cambridge: Polity

⁷ Bourdieu, Pierre (1984) *Homo Academicus* Cambridge: Polity Press

⁸ *ibid* (note 6) chapter 10

follows, I will outline some of the main features of Bourdieu's approach to language, drawing in part on John B. Thompson's editorial introduction to *Language and Symbolic Power*, as well as to the more accessible, 'workshop-based' volume, *An invitation to reflexive sociology*.¹⁰ As will become clear in the analytical chapters which follow (5 and 6), I find Bourdieu's view of language as being firmly located in social relationships and interaction between agents particularly helpful, although it is maybe not 'the original, innovative approach to linguistic phenomena' that some commentators have claimed it to be.¹¹ Jenkins¹² sees the approach as being:

basically the modification of Bourdieu's general theoretical scheme of the current sociolinguistic conventional wisdom, which sees language as a variable social phenomenon, competences in which are socially defined, unevenly distributed and valorised, and rooted in hierarchically structured communicative contexts.

Whatever, Bourdieu from an early stage in his career was aware of the dangers and limitations of the Saussurian brand of linguistics, of the risks of 'a certain kind of intellectual imperialism, whereby a particular model of language could assume a paradigmatic status in the social sciences as a whole', as Thompson puts it.¹³

Bourdieu's project centres on an attempt to move beyond the sociological dichotomies of individual versus society, action versus structure. In his writings, a cluster of key concepts recur - 'subjectivism', 'objectivism', 'habitus', *le sens pratique*, 'hexis', 'field' as well as economic sounding terms, 'market' and 'capital'. The baseline comprises two intellectual orientations, subjectivism and objectivism, both of which are seen as too limited to perceive the social world. Subjectivism for Bourdieu means 'an intellectual orientation to the social world which seeks to grasp the way the world appears to the individuals who are situated within it'¹⁴, while objectivism 'places the primary experience of the social world in brackets and attempts to elucidate the

⁹ Wacquant, Loïc D. (1989) 'Towards a reflexive sociology: a workshop with Pierre Bourdieu' in *Sociological Theory* 7,1 pp.26-63

¹⁰ Bourdieu, Pierre and Wacquant, Loïc D. (1992) *An invitation to reflexive sociology* Cambridge: Polity Press

¹¹ See John B. Thompson (1991) 'Editorial Introduction' in *ibid* (note 6) pp.2-31

¹² Jenkins, Richard (1992) *Pierre Bourdieu* London: Routledge (key sociologists series), p.156

¹³ *ibid* (note 11) pp.3-4

¹⁴ *ibid* (note 11) p.11

structures and principles upon which primary experience depends but which it cannot directly grasp.¹⁵ Although the latter position, for Bourdieu, is the more acceptable, it unfortunately cannot provide the link between the knowledge generated by the analyst and the praxis of individuals in the social world. Hence the elaboration on the concept of **habitus** to try to bridge the gap between the practical knowledge of actors and the models elucidated by the researcher.

The habitus is 'an acquired system of generative schemes objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constituted'¹⁶; it is 'a set of *dispositions* which incline agents to act and react in certain ways.'¹⁷ These dispositions are inculcated and structured, reflecting the childhood conditions in which they were acquired. They are the basis of the habitus which 'gives [individuals] a 'feel' for the game', a sense of what is appropriate ..., a 'practical sense' (*le sens pratique*)'¹⁸ Closely related to habitus is **hexis**, a term which Bourdieu uses to refer to the way the body holds itself in the world, how it is deployed.

Habitus, *le sens pratique*, and hexis are the ways by which Bourdieu seeks to approach the schemes and principles underpinning practices and perceptions, works and appreciations of individuals. However, individual praxis is to be understood not as the result of habitus alone, but as arising from 'the relation between the habitus, on the one hand, and the specific social contexts or 'fields' within which individuals act, on the other.'¹⁹

Field is the key term here, but game and market are also important metaphors, as is capital, used in a sense beyond the merely economic. For Bourdieu, individuals work to accumulate not only material capital, i.e. wealth, but also the educational qualifications he refers to as cultural capital and the intangible honours constituting symbolic capital. These varying forms of capital, and the idea of linguistic practice and a linguistic market will emerge as being of importance in the present dissertation.

¹⁵ *ibid* (note 11) p.11

¹⁶ Pierre Bourdieu (1977) *Outline of a theory of practice* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p95, quoted in Jenkins, R. (note 11) p74

¹⁷ *ibid* (note 11) p.12

¹⁸ *ibid* (note 11) p.13

¹⁹ *ibid* (note 11) p.14

Language in its differing forms and manifestations, from a Bourdieu-based perspective, is a form of practice arising from the relationship between linguistic habitus and linguistic market. As Bourdieu puts it:

What I sought to demonstrate is that a very important part of what goes on in verbal communication, even the content of the message itself, remains unintelligible as long as one does not take into account the totality of the structure of power relations that is present, yet invisible, in the exchange.²⁰

Language resources and competencies are by no means equally distributed. As Thompson²¹ puts it:

... the forms of expression which receive the greatest value and secure the greatest profit are those which are most unequally distributed, both in the sense that the conditions for the acquisition of the capacity to produce them are restricted and in the sense that the expressions themselves are relatively rare on the markets where they appear.

Thus Bourdieu is interested in how the hegemony of certain linguistic codes takes shape, how such codes, taken as part of an individual's cultural capital, are linked to dominant groups. All speech acts are seen as being the outcome of two causal series, namely:

the linguistic habitus, 'encompassing the cultural propensity to say particular things, a specific linguistic competence ... and the social capacity to use that competence appropriately', and

the linguistic market, 'which takes the form of sanctions and censorship, and which defines what cannot be said as much as what can'.²²

The present dissertation is very much concerned with policy in a highly specific linguistic habitus and market, that of contemporary Tunisia (explored in the next section, 1.3). However, it is not enough to deal with linguistic analysis alone, for, as L.D. Wacquant, (one of Bourdieu's closest collaborators) notes:

²⁰ *ibid* (note 10) p.142

²¹ *ibid* (note 11) p.18

²² *ibid* (note 12) p.153

Even the simplest linguistic exchange brings into play a complex and ramifying web of historical power relations between the speaker, endowed with a specific social authority, and an audience which recognises this authority to varying degrees, as well as between the groups to which they respectively belong.²³

Before moving on, however, to a discussion of the linguistic resources which I came across as I was working on this project, I want to briefly discuss a number of other concepts raised by Bourdieu in his discussion of language and symbolic power. Despite the complexity of Bourdieu's academic style²⁴, I find him to be a writer whom it is very useful to 'think with'. I therefore move to a discussion of two other points raised in *Language and Symbolic Power*, namely 'the oracle effect', and censorship. Bourdieu's development of these interpretative concepts can be found essentially in chapter 9 ('Delegation and political fetishism')²⁵ of the above mentioned work.

Censorship is important for Bourdieu because it is one of the factors determining what can and cannot be said. However, censorship does not always take the form of outright interdictions laid down by higher authority. This need falls away:

as the mechanisms which ensure the allocation of agents to different positions ... are increasingly capable of ensuring that the different positions are occupied by agents able and inclined to engage in discourse ... compatible with the objective definition of the position.²⁶

Put more simply, the more people operating in the system believe in it, the more the need for explicit forms of censorship is reduced.

I turn now to Bourdieu's discussion of the symbolic effects of political delegation, to the so-called 'oracle effect' operating through language. Bourdieu gives no concrete examples (apart from a brief discussion of Soviet State art²⁷). However, the

²³ Wacquant, L.D. (1989) 'Towards a reflexive sociology: a workshop with Pierre Bourdieu' in *Sociological Theory*, 7 (1989), p.46

²⁴ Bourdieu is generally more accessible in the interview based volumes where he discusses his work. See for example *ibid* (note 10).

²⁵ 'Delegation and political fetishism' in *ibid* (note 6) pp.204-219

²⁶ *ibid* (note 6) p.156

²⁷ *ibid* (note 6) pp.213-14

discussion, drawing on Marx and more importantly Nietzsche, is interesting in theoretical terms for my subsequent analysis of Tunisian State rhetoric. For Bourdieu, 'delegation', the process by which a group entrusts an individual with powers to represent it is 'an act of magic which enables what was merely a collection of several persons to exist in the form of a fictitious person, a *corporatio*'.²⁸ Through the act of delegation, individuals come to exercise a sort of 'usurpatory ventriloquism'²⁹, giving voice to the people in whose name they are authorized to speak. Thus:

The oracle effect is the exploitation of the transcendence of the group in relation to the single individual, a transcendence that comes about through an individual who in effect is to some extent the group.³⁰

This monopolization of a collective truth may be explored, suggests Bourdieu, by a linguistic analysis of 'the rhetorical strategies through which the structural bad faith of the spokesperson is expressed'.³¹ It is here that we get to the nature of the symbolic domain ('where takeovers by force appear as takeovers of form'³²), and a point crucial to the present dissertation. When the nature of these takeovers in the discourses of the symbolic domain is considered in this light,

... one can turn linguistic analysis into an instrument of political critique, and rhetoric into a science of symbolic powers.³³

It is the relevance of this line of thought in Bourdieu which I intend to reveal in my study of the manipulations of abstract and technical language enveloping government policy - and how this contributes to the legitimation of the delegate.

First however, an examination of the linguistic situation in Tunisia. The country is far from having a unified linguistic market, the result in part of colonial factors - and perhaps because this society, in which the process of nation building is taking place,

²⁸ *ibid* (note 6) p.208

²⁹ *ibid* (note 6) p.211

³⁰ *ibid* (note 6) p.212

³¹ *ibid* (note 6) p.213

³² *ibid* (note 6) p.213

³³ *ibid* (note 6) p.213

differs in many respects from the European model. But then perhaps disunity, heterogeneity in linguistic markets is really the norm in most areas of the world.

1.3 Social artefacts, the languages of Tunisia

A purist is one who maintains a dualistic view of a referent as containing desirable and undesirable elements, who feels able to recognise these elements in a given referent and who, prompted by a desire to promote its well-being and prestige, seeks to remove those elements he deems undesirable. George Thomas (1991)³⁴

The first time visitor to Tunisia is immediately aware of the linguistic mix: signs and posters are in Arabic and Latin letters, and the Francophone visitor will quickly pick out fragments of French mixed into the local spoken language, the Tunisian dialect of Arabic. If the visitor is a tourist, they will soon become aware that in resort towns, shop owners, occasional guides, beach entertainers and others are adept at flicking back and forth between European languages. Perhaps on a day trip, groups of Tunisian students may sing the old Um Kalthoum songs of the fifties and sixties in Egyptian or classical Arabic - and may equally well know all the words to the latest Céline Dion or Michael Jackson hit. If the non-Arab visitor is in the country for an official conference, they will come across the stiff declamatory style used for the official speeches in Modern Standard Arabic, (as it is called in English language textbooks), the *'arabiyya* learnt at school.

The linguistic situation in Tunisia is complex, as this brief impressionistic sketch illustrates. Given that the dissertation is dealing with the words in which policy is expressed (and challenged), I feel that a fairly detailed account of the linguistic situation, and attitudes within it, is essential background. After looking briefly at the development of Arabic, I focus on the Tunisian linguistic market - and look at something of the tensions within it.

³⁴ Thomas, George (1991) *Linguistic Purism* London: Longman,

On the linguistic situation in the Maghreb

A number of commentators, foremost among them Grandguillaume³⁵, have written on the complex linguistic situation prevailing in the Maghreb countries. (In Tunisia with only a very tiny Berber speaking population, barely 1 % of the total, the situation is far simpler than in neighbouring Algeria and Morocco, both with large Berber populations). In all three central Maghreb countries, French was the language of modernity, the vehicle by which, even after independence, the nationalist élites ensured the transfer of technical knowledge and commercial know-how. Abderrahim Youssi³⁶ sums up the role of the former colonial language thus:

With the exception of Libya, [French] is the only language which is spoken, read and written. Despite arabisation, French has a preponderant place in the educational system from the middle of primary school (for the well-off, from pre-school, or even home), right through to University; there is excellent educational material in French, rich and efficient, which provides a link with the western world. For the minor and middle bourgeoisie, French remains the instrument for access to the machinery of the State and all forms of social and economic advancement... French is part of the cacophony of the city streets of the Maghreb, where a good part of the population has a functional mastery of the language.

Youssi goes on to stress the importance of French in the audiovisual media (70 % of air time)³⁷ and underlines how arabisation, launched with the intention of democratising access to education, has in fact reinforced the division between 'the 10% of the bourgeoisie which educates its children in French schools or private schools, and the rest of the population'.³⁸

³⁵ see for example Grandguillaume, Gilbert (1996) 'L'arabisation en question' in *Qantara* 1996, 19, pp.43-45

³⁶ Youssi, Abderrahim (1991) 'Un trilinguisme complexe' in C. et Y. Lacoste (eds) (1991) *L'Etat du Maghreb*, pp.272-277; see also Jochen, Pleines (ed) (1990) *La linguistique au Maghreb* Rabat: Editions Okad

³⁷ This percentage figure is to be taken with caution. With the advent of satellite television, the pay channel Canal Plus Horizons in Tunis and 2M in Morocco, North Africans have increased access to a wide range of entertainment produced or dubbed in French. But satellite television also gives access to the international Arabic channels, including London-based MBC and Qatari-based Al-Jazeera, highly respected for its debates and news coverage.

³⁸ *ibid* (note 36) p.277

The issue of linguistic practice is evidently a complex one, raising issues of access to knowledge and authority which may be less acute in monolingual countries with a well-established national language. Most Tunisians I met, however, were adamant in their pride in their dialect. When a conversation turned to language and the question of bilingualism, someone would often express admiration for the skill of the former president, Habib Bourguiba, as an orator in both French and different levels of Arabic. Incapacity to find the 'right word' in standard Arabic or French for a formal situation is often the subject of some amusement, and ostensibly bilingual Tunisians, operating in French and dialect in their professional life often have difficulty in writing and understanding formal Arabic.

On the development of Arabic

Arabic, *al-lughat al-fusha*, as used today in the Arab states is the product of a long history. The written form of the language is derived from the mid-seventh century semitic bedouin dialects of the central-western Arabian peninsula, and subsequently codified in institutions established by Arab-Muslim rulers in the ninth and tenth centuries. The language experienced a renaissance, the *Nahdha*, in the nineteenth century, when Arab linguists went to work to bring the terminology of science and technology, economic and politics into their language. But as George Thomas³⁹ notes, the aesthetic conservatism and retrospection of the Arabic literary tradition were an overriding influence, reflected:

in archaising and élitist purism, an unwillingness to facilitate the entry of loanwords into the native phonological and morphological systems, a whole-scale invention of new words using Arabic roots, designations of the realia of modern technological society, and a perception that local, vernacular forms of Arabic are bastardised or debased.

The purism which dominated Arabic linguistic thinking was of course dependent on historic conditions. The Arabic language is mentioned twelve times in the Quran as the language of the last celestial revelation - without however being referred to as a divine language (as opposed to a liturgical language like Latin). The Quran was revealed in Arabic for its qualities of clarity (*bayan*), rhythm and flexibility. However, the fact that the revelation took place in a language without a developed

³⁹ *ibid* (note 34) p.140

writing system made an immense effort necessary to prepare for the transmission and development of the Islamic religion:

all information relative to the 'discourse of the Arabs': poetry, texts, tales, fragments of eloquence, proverbs was compiled... all the available grammatical and lexical data was assembled, either by studying rules or lexical usage from this corpus or by consulting native speakers from the North of the Peninsula who would not have been 'contaminated' by contact with foreign languages.⁴⁰

This tradition of seeking out purity was to resurface with the authors and translators of the Nahdha, who:

maintained the founding myth - in part illusory - of continued access to a classical knowledge held as the golden age of Arabic literature: the distance that the authors of the first centuries placed between the language in use in their day and 'the language of the Arabs' was effaced.⁴¹

Talking to Tunisians in the 1990s about language, one may hear comments like 'Oui, on parle arabe... mais pas le vrai arabe' ('We speak Arabic, but not the real Arabic')⁴². So what do Tunisians speak? What implications does this have for the Anglo-researcher?

Diglossia, pluriglossia - and the practicalities of communication

The 'vrai arabe' ('real Arabic') is referred to as '*arabiyya*', in contrast to *darja*, dialect, the language of everyday spoken communication. And within the range of dialect, certain types are valued over others: urban dialects, notably the speech of the *beldia* or Tunisois élite, is more prestigious than rural speech; *darja mhdheba*, 'elevated dialect', used by school teachers and perhaps officials in addressing meetings, commands respect. However, despite its being the mother tongue of all Tunisians, *darja* has no widely used public written form - although it is used in writing in private

⁴⁰ Dichy, Joseph (1996) 'La langue arabe dans l'histoire' p.25 in *Qantara*, 1996, 19, pp.24-27

⁴¹ *ibid* (note 40) p.25

⁴² Ordinary Tunisians are thus unwitting purists in their attitudes to language. As Thomas puts it, 'purists view the removal of undesirable elements as a problem to be solved in order for the language to achieve or maintain its proper status as a prestigious code.' *ibid* (note 34) p.216

correspondence. Dialect is also the language of cinema, television game shows and drama series, a flourishing experimental theatre, and (perhaps a sign of a change in attitude), the mid-1990s saw the publication of a number of plays, including the scripts of the hugely popular *Klem el-Lil* satirical sketches. Some journalists in the Tunisian tabloid papers make use of a large number of dialect words when writing on local issues.

The linguistic situation prevailing in the Arab states (marked split between written and spoken forms, presence of a European second language) has been described and analysed by a number of commentators, and has been referred to as diglossic and pluriglossic. Hinds and Badawi (1986)⁴³, in the introduction to their dictionary of colloquial Egyptian Arabic, give a particularly good analysis of the range of linguistic registers available to the educated Egyptian. This pluriglossia is seen as a block to literacy by some writers. Others, however, stress the historic roots of Arab pluriglossia:

In its current state, and from the Ummayyad period, the Arabic language may be qualified as pluriglossic. This concept, put forward in preference to 'diglossia', reflects the complexity of the system of knowledge which corresponds to the ease of communication held by a cultured Arab with a 'good average level.'⁴⁴

With respect to the Tunisian case, Aziz Krichen (1987)⁴⁵ provides a polemical discussion of diglossia and bilingualism, and their social implications. Walters in a 1996 article⁴⁶ provides the most comprehensive recent account in English, noting the diglossic switching between what MSA (modern standard Arabic) and ETA (educated Tunisian Arabic), and code switching, i.e. between different languages, practised by educated Tunisians between Arabic and French. And he stresses:

⁴³ Hinds, M. and Badawi, El Saïd (1986) *A Dictionary of Egyptian Arabic* Beirut: Librairie du Liban, pp.viii-x

⁴⁴ *ibid* (note 40) p.27

⁴⁵ Krichen, Aziz (1987) 'La fracture de l'intelligentsia. Problèmes de la langue et de la culture nationales' in M. Camau (ed) *Tunisie au présent - une modernité au-dessus de tout soupçon ?* Paris: Editions du Cnrs, pp.297-342

⁴⁶ Walters, Keith (1996) 'Gender, identity and the political economy of language: Anglophone wives in Tunisia' in *Language and Society* 25, pp.515-555 (see esp. pp.525-531 on background to language in Tunisia)

The customary exploitation of all available communicative resources - TA (Tunisian Arabic), MSA, French diglossic switching and code switching - especially among highly educated speakers, has given rise to a highly localised way of mixing codes and languages... The ability to engage in diglossic switching or codeswitching is contingent upon a speaker's level of formal education. Hence the use of either or both strategies, indexes of particular kinds of life experiences and participation in certain economic and symbolic markets.⁴⁷

Many of those interviewed for the present dissertation would move back and forth between *darja* and French with ease, the former language more often than not the base language - although with exceptions. Researchers working in such a situation must therefore very quickly grasp its implications, for they must necessarily learn to cope with codes of a complex linguistic market and habitus, to return to Bourdieu's terminology.

The Tunisian linguistic market: recent developments

It therefore seems useful to provide a broad outline of the recent evolution of this linguist market with a hint of the symbolics at work in language use. Here are my comments are based on my experience researching planning issues, but also as a university lecturer and interpreter / translator. However, I also draw on Herzfeld's discussion of national language development, 'The Language Fetish'⁴⁸, based as it is on the example of Greece, a country which until recently had a diglossic situation similar in some ways to that prevailing in the Arab countries.

In Tunisia, formal written Arabic, in official terms, is at the top of the tree. As Article 1 of the 1976 Tunisian constitution clearly states, 'Tunisia is a free state, independent and sovereign; its religion is Islam, its language is Arabic, and its régime is the republic.' The reinforcement of Arabic at all levels of public life has been an important area of Tunisian government policy since independence in 1956: correspondence in Arabic within and between certain government ministries became compulsory, the teaching of Arabic in schools was expanded, and various parts of the State bureaucracy, hitherto in French, were 'arabised' with new terminology being

⁴⁷ *ibid* (note 45) p.530

⁴⁸ Herzfeld, M. (1992) 'The Language Fetish', chapter 4 of *The Social Production of Indifference* Chicago: Chicago University Press, pp.98-126

developed.⁴⁹ Arabic as the national language was seen as a key part of building the new Tunisian Republic. The process of course is a familiar one. As Herzfeld puts it: Nationalist rhetoric fastens people's attention on language as though it were an immutably perfect simulacrum of the nation itself.⁵⁰

However, the situation is, as indicated above, rather more complex than the essentialist ideology of the modern Tunisian state suggested. The all-encompassing identity of the national language was to be impinged upon by the inevitability of a bilingual policy if modern technology was to be mastered by Tunisians - and by the divisions within the local usages of written Arabic itself.

Hamzaoui, writing on the arabization process in the early 1960s, suggests that there are three sorts of *arabe littéral* (written Arabic):

1. literary Arabic (*l'arabe littéraire*) as used by writers;
2. written press Arabic, which plays 'a major role in the transformation of Arabic syntax where calque terms dominate', and
3. administrative written Arabic, closely related to the language of the press.

Hamzaoui refers to this latter as *l'arabe moyen* ('middle Arabic') 'as written and read by the Tunisian bureaucrat of average culture'.⁵¹ Hamzaoui's prediction was that this language would maintain its presence as an intermediary language - rather like that of the various legal corps in earlier Tunisian history.

But in opposition to what was this 'middle Arabic' to maintain its presence?

Hamzaoui was no doubt thinking of an increased use of higher status forms of written Arabic - or possibly, of an eventual threat posed by another major component of the Tunisian linguistic scene: French. Although the independent Tunisian State granted primacy to written Arabic, French was essential to the effective functioning of the economy and the educational system. Put bluntly, large areas of the economy functioned (and still function) in French where the linguistic purism of Arabic is

⁴⁹ On this see Hamzaoui, Rached (1970) 'L'arabisation au Ministère de l'Intérieur. La brigade de circulation de la Garde nationale' in *Quelques aspects du bilinguisme en Tunisie*, Cahiers du CERES, Série linguistique 3, (Université de Tunis) November 1970, pp.11-73 plus appendices. The paper sheds some light on the adaptations and compromises reached in the development of a new Arabic lexis for the Tunisian highway police.

⁵⁰ *ibid* (note 47) p.113

⁵¹ *ibid* (note 48) p.73

unable to keep up with the plethora of new concepts and terms requiring a high degree of precision in translation.

The situation remains broadly the same today, although the educated Francophone Jewish community has all but vanished. French is the language of the liberal professions, technology and the business community; it is also the language of some intellectual groups, and is probably increasingly understood at a basic level by large numbers of people who watch international news and sporting events, and French-dubbed Hollywood films on satellite television. To all intents and purposes, the French language looks set to maintain its position, along with *darja*, the language of everyday communication, despite the 'discursive veneer' of official Arabic.⁵² The question remains as to whether the written form of Arabic will be able to keep up with the needs of the modern economy - and hence the linguistic market, or whether dialect, with its capacity to take on and coin new lexis⁵³, will achieve a improved status alongside languages for communicating with key European partners, French, Italian and English.

Tensions in the linguistic market and the planning profession

This diverse linguistic market is not without its tensions, however, as I was to discover in the course of my interviews and discussions. One highly competent French-educated planner had found it difficult to operate in Arabic - and had hence left the municipal administration for private sector consultancy. Another remarked on the perils of using French in high level meetings, even when important concepts were at stake, saying that at this level, speaking in French 'you're less and less credible'. Said another technical expert:

(fieldnotes, 14 January 1997) 'I've attended meetings where I felt unable to take the floor - even when I disagreed with what was being said - because I couldn't intervene in Arabic. There's too much dogmatism. There should be a full debate...

⁵² *ibid* (note 47) p.102

⁵³ Wexler makes a useful observation on this: 'The gap between written and spoken forms can be heightened by the closure of the former and the opening of the latter to a given resource, e.g. colloquial Arabic is more receptive to foreign loans than modern written classical Arabic which prefers loan translations formed from native components' Wexler, P. (1971) 'Diglossia, language standardization and purism: parameters for a typology of literary languages' in *Lingua* 27, pp.330-54

but that won't happen under the current government. It's only the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean which use Arabic, with all this talk about opening up, what about our opening up to the other countries.'

Another planner summarised the issue of planning and language as follows:

(fieldnotes, 18 January 1997) 'Look, when I prepare planning regulations or construction guidelines, I use short phrases, so that in the event of translation, the Arabic will be clear. The Arabisation of planning will take place in the next twenty years. When I was in Sanaâ, the Yemenis said to me, you're lucky (in Tunisia), you can read the documents in the original. French permits the regular transfer of knowledge. It may be élitist - but in your home town in England, who reads the planning regulations, apart from the experts. French allows the transmission of practices and knowledge. We express as far as we can in Arabic. The thing is we use very separate linguistic registers... lots of the TV is in Egyptian, everybody understands it, but no-one speaks it...'

Though French is the language in which the vast majority of highly educated Tunisians express themselves with ease and precision, discussion forums on the Tunisian national television are almost invariably in Arabic. Speakers codeswitching between French and Arabic may be upbraided by presenters or show hosts. The subtext to the use of French - or Franco-Arabic - by educated Tunisians is that failure to use the national language with ease somehow disturbs '... the committed complacency with which the language is thought to stand for the purity of the people.'⁵⁴

This discussion of the languages in use in present day Tunisia may seem a little lengthy. However, its importance will emerge later with the analysis of planning

⁵⁴ *ibid* (note 47) p.102

reports and press articles on a piece of government policy with a strong symbolic dimension. Tunisia does not have a unified linguistic market in the sense that this exists in many European nation states, and educated Tunisians, with wide language resources available to them are adept at shifting 'from one sign system to another in response to a variety of socio-psychological circumstances dictated by particular communicative requirements.'⁵⁵ The tensions generated by the rarity of certain linguistic resources⁵⁶, access to them and the requirements of the job market are yet to emerge as a public issue - consensus around the 'national language' (Arabic) for the moment commands general support. However, as Herzfeld puts it:

The creation of a national language, as the example of the French Revolution shows, offers an attractive way of collapsing the ramified cultural history of the nation into a single atemporal unity, dazzling those critical eyes that might otherwise tempted to examine more closely the inequalities and disunity that the real actions of the leaders promote.⁵⁷

In terms of the material analysed later on - documents, reports, people's words, in different languages, registers and semiotic units, with varying rhetorical purposes and textual standards - I do not consider these items as linguistic production merely to be understood and deciphered. Rather, following Pierre Bourdieu, 'they are also *signs of wealth*, intended to be evaluated and appreciated, and *signs of authority*, intended to be believed and obeyed.'⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Hatim, B. and Mason, I. (1990) *Discourse and the Translator* London: Longman, p.129

⁵⁶ Kress and Hodge also raise the issue of the scarcity of linguistic resources: 'Our case is only that 'language' ... displays massive regularities but also systematic contradictions, and its forms are widely distributed but not equally shared throughout a community of users' in Hodge, R. and Kress, G. (1993) *Language as Ideology* London: Routledge

⁵⁷ *ibid* (note 47) p.113

⁵⁸ Bourdieu, Pierre (1991) *Language and Symbolic Power* edited by J.B. Thompson, translated by G. Raymond and M. Adamson Cambridge: Polity Press, p.66

1.4 Researching the city, researching in the city

This asymmetry has its counterpart in the anthropologist's project: the Self's search for knowledge of the Other takes the form of a personal expedition into the Other's cultural and social territory, to seek a kind of understanding that has been defined by the needs of western institutions. Kevin Dwyer, 1982, xvi⁵⁹

As a foreigner learning Tunisian Arabic, mastering the code-switching process for everyday communication, investigating an area of public policy in Tunis, the researcher is quite a novelty for most of the Tunisians with whom one comes into contact. Surprised at my ability in the local language, people would mention a cousin with a French wife who had been in the country for ten years but never managed to learn a word. Unused to foreigners learning their unwritten language, Tunisians would try to guess my identity: was I in the Peace Corps? (which has a particularly effective method for getting young Americans speaking Tunisian Arabic in a few weeks). I could pass for the product of a mixed marriage: taxi drivers and people in shops were curious - did I grow up abroad? when had I returned to Tunisia? In situations like these, a friend used to say of me, joking, 'Oh, he's from Bizerte' (a town on the north-east coast where the people are supposedly fairer skinned).

Whatever the situation, people would want to know about how you learned their language, what you thought of their country. Faced with this sort of curiosity, the researcher is constantly involved in an exchange, is being 'researched' in a sense for live information about attitudes from elsewhere - and ultimately called upon to re-evaluate opinions and ideas. Hence when the time came to go back to the library, the writings of ethnographers on their experiences in North Africa came to have a new resonance for me.

Middle Eastern and North African settings have been important in what Dale Eickelman calls the 'new wave' of ethnographic writing.⁶⁰ This is characterised by three main features: 'a heightened awareness of the "multiple voices" constitutive of

⁵⁹ Dwyer, Kevin (1982) *Moroccan Dialogues - anthropology in question* Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press

⁶⁰ Eickelman, Dale F. (1981, 1989) *The Middle East: an anthropological approach* New Jersey: Prentice Hall, p.373 (quotations are from the 1989 edition)

any society', a concern with the ethnographic conversation, and 'explicit attention to the contexts and practices of ethnographic or historical narrative and presentation'.⁶¹ There is an oft stated concern for reaching an understanding of a capitalised Other, and in the most extreme cases, the author in this type of writing claims 'to serve solely as editor, translator or presenter'.⁶²

Thus in much recent ethnographic writing on North Africa, and notably in Morocco - perhaps the country the most widely studied by French and United States scholars - there is a definite interest in the politics of anthropological writing. This can clearly be seen in the works of the likes of Duvignaud⁶³, Rabinow⁶⁴, Crapanzano⁶⁵, Dwyer, Ossman⁶⁶ and Benani-Chraïbi.⁶⁷

Rabinow, for example, in his *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*, talks extensively about his meetings with the Moroccan Other, but says little, as Eickelman points out, about his dealings with the others involved in anthropological research.⁶⁸ However, in later writing Rabinow acknowledges the importance of 'corridor talk' in the research process: 'Moving the conditions of the production of anthropological knowledge out of the domains of gossip - where it remains the property of those around to hear it - into that of knowledge would be a step in the right direction.'⁶⁹ The representation of multiple voices became of interest to me as I gathered material in Tunis for this dissertation, as did the difficult question of 'writing up' the material. One important text to me was Jean Duvignaud's *Chebika*, an account of rural life

⁶¹ *ibid* (note 60) pp.373-374

⁶² *ibid* (note 60) p.373

⁶³ Duvignaud, Jean (1977) *Change at Shebika: report from a North African village*, trans. Frances Frenaye Austin: University of Texas original (1968) *Chebika, étude sociologique* Paris: Gallimard

⁶⁴ Rabinow, Paul (1977) *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco* Berkeley: University of California Press

⁶⁵ Crapanzano, V.(1980) *Tuhami, portrait of a Moroccan* Chicago: University of Chicago Press

⁶⁶ Ossman, Susan (1991) *Moving pictures: Mass Images and Society in Morocco* PhD dissertation Berkeley: University of California

⁶⁷ Benani-Chraïbi, Mounia (1995) *Soumis et rebelles, les jeunes au Maroc* Casablanca: Editions Le Fennec

⁶⁸ *ibid* (note 60) p.376

⁶⁹ Rabinow, Paul (1986) 'Representations are social facts: modernity and post-modernity in anthropology' see p.253 in James Clifford and George E. Marcus (eds) *Writing Culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography* Berkeley: University of California Press, pp.234-261

written by a French ethnographer working with a team of Tunisian urban sociology students in the 1960s. This dense text purports to recreate the thoughts and life-worlds of the poor inhabitants of an isolated cliff oasis in south-western Tunisia. Although the text, based as it was on team interviewing, marks a break with the monographic gaze of earlier ethnographic writing on Tunisia, its representation of the inner thoughts of (say) Mohamed as he goes to work in the oasis must be taken for what it is: a construction, a valuable contribution to the understanding of a deprived community in the rural South - but still a construction.

In a different vein, Kevin Dwyer in his *Moroccan Dialogues*⁷⁰ seeks to bring out the structured inequality of those involved in the ethnographic encounter. Underpinning his account of the life of a Moroccan villager is the notion that in their work ethnographers must be able to share information on themselves as they move into the process of studying other's lives. Dwyer worked on the basis of events, and Part I of his book, 'A "record" of fieldwork' is centred on events ('The first dialogue', 'A meeting of the religious brotherhood', 'A circumcision') which were discussed in great depth with Dwyer's interviewee, the Faqir. Dwyer presents the dialogues without the intervening analysis usual in qualitative research write-ups. Events and questions are the structuring factor.

In this perhaps rather extreme form of the research process, Dwyer's aim in preserving the sequence of events and dialogues is to escape the objectifying gaze of so much earlier ethnographic writing. He is not ordering, categorizing, inserting a piece of narrative here, a quote there, to create some sort of definitive meaning. There is an awareness of the contingent nature of the questions posed to the Faqir:

They were not flowing simply from an event but more, I thought, from my own personal, social and cultural concerns: from my political beliefs; from an awareness, heightened by my encounter with the Faqir, of my Euro-American origins; from my partial knowledge of the academic literature on Morocco, from my previous experience of Morocco.⁷¹

Dwyer, although he ultimately keeps control through the questions he poses, nevertheless stresses that these questions 'must, by the nature of language and human

⁷⁰ *ibid* (note 59)

⁷¹ *ibid* (note 59) p.95-96

experience, be culturally and historically phrased'.⁷² This was a message which struck a chord with me as I grappled to analyze the notes I wrote up after meetings with planners, exhibitions, and visits to the western suburbs. Categories can be sifted out, ordered - but the personal, inter-cultural and relational side of fieldwork is always there, a backdrop to the desire to create objective data.

For myself, working in Tunis, a city of multiple languages, I eventually realised that reaching an understanding of the workings of urban policy would be an uncertain process; I was confronted with documents which seemed to say little, contradictory figures, numerous individual cases and isolated examples, an inaccurate map in a definitive report. I was highly aware of the directed nature of my attempt to communicate. I was faced with the personal uncertainty of working on a topic - a public housing project - without any formal qualification in architecture or urban design, in a situation where the former was the dominant profession in the conception and execution of planned housing developments. Of the little published research on housing in Tunisia, the majority was by a small number of expert architects and planners, French⁷³ and Tunisian.⁷⁴ Public expression of housing and related urban issues at conferences and seminars, which often seemed an odd mixture of the academic, the political and the purely sociable, was the preserve of established practitioners, again generally architects. In these forums, the matter of public participation was rarely evoked.

In such a professional community, my theoretical concerns with forms of representation and language could find no real echo. My knowledge of Anglo-Saxon urban and planning theory cut little ice. However, as I got to know the rehoused communities and their original area, the Médina, I came to realise that I had certain advantages and different openings to the 'official' groups. I was outside the Tuniso-Tunisois struggles for influence, an observer or eavesdropper on developments in policy for the historic part of the Médina. In fact, because of my inside-outsider position, I was probably able to speak to a wider range of people with ease.⁷⁵ And I

⁷² *ibid* (note 59) p.271

⁷³ See for example Santelli, Serge (1992) *Médinas - l'architecture traditionnelle en Tunisie* Tunis: Dar Achraf;
Santelli, Serge (1995) *Tunis, le creuset méditerranéen* Paris: Editions du Demi-Cercle / Editions du Cnrs

⁷⁴ See for example Abdelkafi, Jellal (1988) *La Médina de Tunis, espace historique* Paris: Editions du Cnrs and Tunis: Alif - les Editions de la Méditerranée and Chabbi, Morched (1981) 'Une nouvelle forme d'urbanisation dans le Grand Tunis : l'habitat spontané péri-urbain' in *Revue tunisienne de géographie* 8, pp.9-48

was to find that I was able to get beyond an overfamiliarity with the city to question many of the practices I (re)discovered there after a prolonged period in the UK in late 1996. A knowledge of Anglo-American writings on gentrification and housing change enabled me to re-evaluate my line of approach and escape the repetitiveness of the Francophone writing on Tunis, while a reading of Bourdieu's *La misère du monde*⁷⁶, a collection of transcribed interviews which give a picture of poverty as experienced in de-industrialising areas of northern France, helped me to envisage a freer, more imaginative approach to the multi-occupancy issue in Tunis. The situation in the rue des Jonquilles (Daffodil Street) area as portrayed by Bourdieu, with its limited, low-paid and unstable employment and families, many of them originally from the Maghreb, falling ever more deeply into debt, was not without parallels in the world of the Tunis rehousing estates.

Thus in this piece of work on representations of authority, deprivation and the city, I moved from an initial, text-focused portrayal of institutional action to a wider view of the ways in which policy is implemented and 'marketed'. Although the significance of deprived groups' views is in general marginalised - until things reach a point of no return, as was the case of the oukalas - those outside the power élite, without access to the languages and sites of public expression, may regulate, challenge and adapt the offerings of the political leadership, evolving in discursive spaces very different from that of political rhetoric. This is well off the written record, of course. To explore the words and images signifying 'competent action for the citizen', 'deprivation', and 'authority', I needed a theoretical framework. Hence, in the next two chapters, I turn to representation, and the sub-field of socio-linguistics known as discourse analysis. The initial aim is to provide an overview of the area of theory. This is then followed by an analysis of the acceptable, official representations informing policy and an ethnographic piece - one of the components of which is everyday representations of the themes (official action and deprivation) mentioned above. Key text for this examination of the ordinary practices of a modern nation State is the work of Michel Foucault on correct sets of representations and shifting social practice.

⁷⁵ This point on the advantages possessed by the researcher from outside is stressed by Abdallah Laroui (1977) in his *Les origines sociales et culturelles du nationalisme marocain* Paris: Maspéro, p.15

⁷⁶ Bourdieu, Pierre (1993) *La misère du monde* Paris: Seuil

2

FOCAL THEORY: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS, CRITICAL LINGUISTICS AND REPRESENTATION

Based as it is on words and images, the present dissertation draws on contemporary discourse theory to approach a range of texts concerned with housing policy. The authors of these texts adopted different strategies to achieve their aims, producing texts which satisfy the norms expected in a given genre of writing. There are of course long established world views which dictated why people follow a given communicative model - and local specificities are important too. Following Scollon and Scollon¹, I adopt the term 'systems of discourse' to designate these different communicational paradigms available to social actors as they deal with different strategies and roles in the real world. I begin this chapter, however, with a discussion of the term discourse - and why discourse was taken as focal theory for the present dissertation;

2.1 On discourse, discursive formations - and power

Discourse became very much a buzz word in the Anglophone social sciences in the late 1980s, gaining wide currency through translations of high profile French intellectuals like Michel Foucault. (The French *discours*, however, is a term with far wider currency than the English 'discourse', almost exclusively an academic term). 'Discourse', now found in a wide range of research texts, is difficult to pin down: often it is used in a broad way to mean something like 'thematic area of knowledge' or even just 'talk'. The term has found its way from social science research into planning - see for example the work of Hajer on environmental discourses, and has come to provide, in a variety of guises, a theoretical focus for tackling the ambiguities of language in use.

In English academic writing there are a number of ways in which the term discourse has been used. Originally, in linguistics, the term 'discourse analysis' was used to deal with issues of coherence and cohesion in texts, how effective units are established at

¹ Scollon, R. and Scollon, S.W. (1995) *Intercultural Communication: a discourse approach* Oxford: Blackwell, p.95

the level above that of individual words and sentences. According to this usage, the aim is 'to understand the inferential processes by which speakers communicate their meanings and by which hearers interpret what is said'.²

At a wider level, 'discourses', types of language in use, are studied to reach an understanding of how language, speakers / writers, function and social context are related.

Finally, there is discourse understood as a whole system of communication. Here we reach a Foucauldian perspective: in describing the changing approaches to madness and sexuality, Foucault saw discourses as ways of talking and thinking about an area which can and will shift with time. Discourse allows certain things to be said - and leaves others unsaid, i.e. discourses can have effects of closure. Scollon and Scollon, working along these lines, refer to this level of communication as 'systems of discourse' which:

form a kind of self-contained system of communication with a shared language or jargon, with particular ways in which people learn what they need to become members, with a particular ideological position, and with quite specific forms of interpersonal relationships among members of these groups.³

For Scollon and Scollon, the most useful way of apprehending a given discursive system - and they discuss several, including the Utilitarian discourse system going back to Bentham and J.S. Mill - is by taking it to be constituted of four main elements, namely 'forms of discourse', 'socialization', 'ideology' and 'face systems'. The relative importance of these elements within a discursive system can vary. In the case of the Utilitarian discourse system, they consider ideology to be most important element). The four elements are defined as follows⁴:

1. Members will hold a common ideological position and recognise a set of extra-discourse features which define them as a group (ideology).
2. Socialization is accomplished primarily through these preferred norms of discourse (socialization)

² *ibid* (note 1) p.95

³ *ibid* (note 1) p.95

⁴ *ibid* (note 1) p.98

3. A set of preferred forms of discourse serves as banners or symbols of membership and identity. (forms of discourse⁵)
4. Face relationships are prescribed among members or between members and outsiders (face systems⁶).

There is a further key point to this breakdown of the concept of discourse systems: any individual will in all likelihood belong to several, sometimes contradictory discourse systems. A planner in a developing country, say, will find themselves switching from a professional discourse system, the mastery of which will have been acquired through education and socialization in the work place, to quite different discursive systems to deal with home and family. This is probably true for anyone involved in a professional milieu, but the contrast is all the more marked in countries where the vernacular language is not that of formal written communication.

Discursive formations and their regulation

There is a clear affiliation between the Scollons' definition of systems of discourse and the Foucauldian 'discursive formation', produced by sets of closely related statements, referring to the same objects and in a similar style as part of a common institutional or political pattern. The crucial point, however, from the Foucauldian perspective, is that discourse is deeply concerned with the production of knowledge through language, and is itself produced by discursive practices producing meaning through language and text. Hall⁷ notes the following main features of discourse as developed by Foucault: discourse can be produced by many individuals in different settings; discursive systems are not closed; and, somewhat opaquely, Foucault describes the relationships within discursive systems as being regular, as being a system of dispersion - 'Whenever one can describe between a number of statements, such a system of dispersion, whenever ... one can define a regularity ... [then] we will say ... that we are dealing with a discursive formation.'⁸

⁵ forms of discourse: preferred forms of communication

⁶ face systems: preferred or assumed human relationships

⁷ Hall, S. (1992) 'The West and the Rest' p.292 in S. Hall and B. Gieben (eds) *Formations of Modernity* Cambridge: Polity Press in association with the Open University Press, pp.275-331

⁸ Foucault, Michel (1972) *The Archaeology of Knowledge* London: Tavistock, p.338

How then do Foucault's discursive formations take shape? What factors, what procedures govern them? In the baroque flow of Foucault's oft quoted inaugural lecture at the Collège de France⁹ are the elements of an answer. A range of checks, thresholds and boundaries have taken shape to regulate the rampant spread of discourse. There is prohibition - 'every discursive setting is limited by rules and conventions whereby many other possibilities are excluded (reduction and exclusion)'.¹⁰ Then procedures, operating as principles of classification, arrangement, distribution, limit the operation of chance events. Finally, there is a third group of procedures which regulates discourse, the reduction of the number of persons with appropriate skills to operate in a discourse. Although these are very abstract regulatory factors, they nevertheless have a certain bearing on considering examples of actual discourse from an analytic viewpoint. They also raise the matter of how discourse is related to power and knowledge for Foucault, to which issue I now move.

Power / Knowledge

The concept of power / knowledge as elaborated by Foucault has been much discussed by academics in recent years. Whatever, in his later work, the concept was of crucial importance in Foucault's writing:

... we should abandon a whole tradition that allows us to imagine that knowledge can exist only where the power relations are suspended and that knowledge can develop only outside its injunctions, its demands and its interests ... We should admit rather that power produced knowledge ... that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge.¹¹

For Foucault, this power / knowledge is produced and transmitted in discourse. However, this discourse, despite its essential role in the reproduction of power, can also ultimately be a disruptive factor: 'it condemns and exposes [power], renders it

⁹ Foucault, Michel (1972) *The Archaeology of Knowledge* New York: Harper and Row transl. A.M. Sheridan-Smith (original publ. 1972, *L'Archéologie du savoir* Paris: Gallimard). In appendix *The Order of Discourse* transl. R. Swyer of *L'Ordre du discours : leçon inaugurale au Collège de France, le 2 décembre 1970*

¹⁰ Wodak, Ruth (1997) *Disorders of Discourse* London: Longman, p.25

¹¹ Foucault, Michel (1977) *Discipline and Punish - the birth of the prison* transl. A. Sheridan New York: Pantheon, p.27

fragile and makes it possible to thwart it'.¹² Foucault is thus determined to see discourse as offering the possibility to challenge monolithic, hierarchical bodies of knowledge.

This Foucauldian perspective on discourse as a signifying system, regulating and producing knowledge in a given culture is important to my work on a specific area of State-produced discourse as it stresses the importance of considering the conditions in which a given discourse is possible, how particular dominant knowledges are operated - and others are excluded. The discursive formation of planning, with its technical rationality is clearly part of a wider discourse 'implicated in the instantiation and maintenance of social and economic relations'.¹³

I thus take discourse as a general framework which brings together language and image, concepts and knowledge, narratives and thought in practices. It enables users to create meaningful subject positions, can be read and (re)constructed. I do not take discourse to be the result of present social arrangements, but an actual active part of them. New discourse formations can arise, shaping the lives of social actors.

To conclude, in the present dissertation, with its interest in how representations of the world are encoded in language and image, examining discourses is important as a way to see how hegemonic practices become established - and maintain their hold. I now turn to critical discourse analysis, an area of academic research which, drawing inspiration in part from Foucault's work, has developed rapidly since the late 1980s.

2.2 Introducing critical discourse analysis

Foucault's work, though an underlying influence in much of recent socio-linguistic research, is in general too fluid and abstract to be of much guidance when turning to actual bodies of text. Like certain other European thinkers / public intellectuals, Foucault revels in the interplay of phrase and meaning, producing a sense of subtlety - and inconsistency in his writing. Confronted with two quite different bodies of written text on a planning issue I had managed to assemble over a seven year period, I

¹² Foucault, Michel (1990) *History of Sexuality I* London: Penguin, p.101

¹³ Potter, J. and Wetherall, M. (1992) *Mapping the Language of Racism: discourse and the legitimization of exploitation* Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, p.60

turned to the area of research known as critical discourse analysis for an approach to a major policy concern, the provision of housing for the urban poor.

Critical discourse analysis (C.D.A.), and the closely related field of critical linguistics (C.L.), as the terms suggest, take critique as an integral part of analysis. An extremely broad field of research is covered by C.D.A.: drawing inspiration from Foucault, Halliday and others, it ranges from linguistics on the one hand via semiotics to the edges of cultural studies and media sociology with the likes of J.B. Thompson. Fowler¹⁴ reviews the development and future of critical linguistics along with its goals: the proponents of C.L. 'are concerned to use linguistic analysis to expose the misrepresentation and discrimination in a variety of modes of public discourse ... the goals of critical linguists are in general terms defamiliarisation or consciousness raising.'¹⁵ Among the leading figures in the field are Fowler¹⁶, Fairclough¹⁷, Hodge and Kress¹⁸ (of whom more in chapter 3), Caldas-Coulthard and Coulthard¹⁹, Edwards and Potter²⁰, and van Dijk²¹. On one edge of the field, C.D.A. research is contributing to challenging new directions in psychology, re-examining conceptualizations of memory and the attribution of mental states.²² Elsewhere, the C.D.A. approach put forward by J.B. Thompson is expressly concerned with how to conceptualize ideology, and analyse its links with everyday language. Here discourse analysis reaches the domains of sociology.

Most recent published discourse analytic research, appearing in journals such as *Discourse and Society* and *Language in Society*, which gained their academic following in the 1990s as the discipline of C.D.A. took root, is based on a wide

¹⁴ Fowler, R. (1996) 'On critical linguistics' in C.R. Caldas-Coulthard, M. Coulthard et al (1996) *Texts and Practices: readings in critical discourse analysis* London: Routledge, pp.3-14

¹⁵ *ibid* (note 1) p.5

¹⁶ Fowler, R. (1991) *Language in the News: discourse and ideology in the press* London: Routledge

¹⁷ Fairclough, Norman (1992) *Discourse and Social Change* Cambridge: Polity

¹⁸ Hodge, R. and Kress, G. (1993) *Language as Ideology* (2nd ed) London: Routledge

¹⁹ Caldas-Coulthard, R., Coulthard, M. et al (1996) *Texts and Practices: readings in critical discourse analysis* London: Routledge

²⁰ Edwards, D. and Potter, J. (1992) *Discursive Psychology* Newbury Park: Sage

²¹ van Dijk, T.A. (1993) 'Editorial' in *Discourse and Society* 4 (2) pp.131-32 (special issue on critical discourse analysis)

²² see *ibid* (note 8) for example.

selection of empirical material which ranges across courtroom proceedings, everyday conversations, television and newspaper reporting and political addresses. Much work has been done on the construction of various issues in the news media and how the media manipulate information to create coherent representations of the real world. On these lines, for example; Kress and Hodge examined the language of the British media with respect to the 1991 Gulf conflict. Here the writers were concerned to examine the linguistic categorizations in use in the representations of this war. Another important study is Fairclough's examination of Margaret Thatcher's discourse: analysing Thatcher's specific linguistic usage, Fairclough shows how she created a change in the general presuppositions underlying British political discourse prior to her taking power.²³

What are the techniques of C.D.A.? I provide a review of these, along with methodological approaches, in chapter 3. A typical C.D.A. research paper in the 1990s would look at questions of lexis, the use of pronominal indexicals, (I / my; you / your, etc), and nominalizations (where a verbal causal process becomes a noun, object of a new phrase). There might be an examination of text on the page in relation to images. Thus quoting Fowler once more, 'critical linguistics is an instrumental linguistics looking beyond the formal structures of language as an abstract system, towards the practical interaction of language and context.'²⁴ It is not without its critics however, to whom I turn in subsection 2.4 below.

The central idea, however, of C.D.A. is that in the ambiguities of language in use, causal processes are somehow mystified. Thus C.D.A. 'tends to make ... linguistic analysis convincing by comparing the textual version with an often implicit version of what is really the case.'²⁵ Before moving on, I would like to highlight some of the key features of the 'demystificatory readings of ideology-laden texts'²⁶ produced by C.D.A.

Firstly, it seems to me that C.D.A. has the potential to cover a vast range of themes. It is dealing with the ways in which text establishes itself as factual and / or neutral, and with the ways in which textual representations take root as a basis for action. Potter

²³ Fairclough, Norman (1989) *Language and Power* London: Longman

²⁴ *ibid* (note 1) p.10

²⁵ Potter, J. (1996) *Representing Reality: discourses, rhetoric and social construction* Newbury Park: Sage, p.227

²⁶ *ibid* (note 1) p.6

notes three main themes - ontological gerrymandering, extrematization and normalization / abnormalization - which I feel underly a great deal of C.D.A. work.²⁷ Ontological gerrymandering is, as the rather unlovely term suggests, about the definition of an issue, the choice of factors considered as relevant, and the side-lining of others. The consideration of metaphorical language, descriptive terms, and what Randal Marlin²⁸ calls 'intention-promoting verbs', all help to get at how certain interests are favoured in text, how 'the rhetorical boundary [is drawn] around the most advantageous issues'.²⁹ The doublet extrematization / minimization deals with how, say, the goodness / badness, importance / triviality of an issue is built up - another central feature of much language in use. And finally, normalization and its opposite is to do with how people justify their actions, how

accounts of individuals and groups are recurrently concerned with presenting their own and others' actions as normal and natural, or as unwarranted, deviant or problematic in some way.³⁰

All three of these concepts can be traced in much current C.D.A., and they are relevant to the present study which focuses on representations, on how the subtleties of text, the often ambiguous sense of words assume particular meanings in context. I am interested in the social, action-oriented uses of language, and consider the ideological load of text - hence the need to look at relationships between discourse, representation and ideology before moving into the specifics of discourse analysis.

2.3 On the characteristics of discourse, ideology and representation

Although not exclusively the case, one of the main factors motivating much discourse analytic research seems to be a shared perception that language in use acts to legitimate the status quo, that it is essential to the self-legitimizing activities of State formations and dominant social groups. (Look into recent issues of *Discourse in Society* and you will find articles on Hong Kong and the discourse justifying colonial

²⁷ *ibid* (note 25) p.176 ff.

²⁸ Marlin, Randal (1984) 'The rhetoric of action description' in *Informal Logic* 6, pp.26-29 quoted in Potter, J (note 25) p.184

²⁹ *ibid* (note 25) p.185

³⁰ *ibid* (note 25) p.177

withdrawal³¹, Polish censorship techniques³², and the discourse legitimating the expulsion of 'illegal' immigrants from Spain³³). Those in secure positions have a clear need to obtain and maintain the acceptance of situations which, to say the very least, are severely unjust. Regarding the mass media, Ericson et al³⁴ tell us that 'news acknowledges order as it is preferred by members of the knowledge élites, and creates the class of political spectators'. A frame of normality is constructed by a specific discursive system.

On ideology and hegemony

It is at this point that it becomes necessary to consider discourses along with a number of other concepts - ideology, hegemony, representation - which figure prominently in many recent studies on discourse. Although there is not space here to go into the details of the wide ranging theoretical debates on ideology, the concept is too important in contemporary socio-linguistic research to be left on one side.

The position taken by Norman Fairclough in his 1989 *Language and Power* is that language is centrally involved in power and the struggle for power, and that it is thus involved through its innate ideological properties: 'ideological power, the power to project one's practices as universal and 'common sense' is a significant complement to economic and political power.'³⁵

For Fairclough, therefore:

... the operation of ideology can be seen in terms of ways of constructing texts which constantly and cumulatively impose assumptions upon text interpreters and text producers, typically without either being aware of it.³⁶

³¹ Flowerdew, J. (1997) 'The discourse of colonial withdrawal: a case study in the creation of mythic discourse' in *Discourse and Society* 8 (4) pp.453-474

³² Galasinski, D. and Jaworski, A. (1997) 'The linguistic construction of reality in the Black Book of Polish Censorship' in *Discourse and Society* 8 (3) pp.341-357

³³ Martin Rojo, L. and van Dijk, T.A. (1997) ' "There was a problem, and it was solved!": legitimating the expulsion of "illegal" migrants in Spanish parliamentary discourse' in *Discourse and Society*, 8 (4) pp.523-566

³⁴ Ericson, R.V. et al (1989) *Negotiating Control: a study of news sources* Milton Keynes: Open University Press, p.398

³⁵ Fairclough, Norman (1989) *Language and Power* London: Longman, p.33

³⁶ *ibid* (note 35) p.83

Clearly, the functioning of ideology from this position is closely related to hegemony, the promotion of particular accounts by dominant religious or political groups as part of the process of hegemonic struggle as analysed by Gramsci.³⁷

Fortunately, however, ideology ('ideas which arise from a given set of material interests'³⁸) as discussed by Fairclough, a leading discourse analyst, is less Orwellian than the above quotation would suggest. Although '... all ideology is in one way or another to do with positioning subjects', Fairclough considers that:

The social subject is ... constituted as a particular configuration of subject positions. A consequence is that the subject is far less coherent and unitary than one tends to assume.

Thus, from this position, social determination and the creative capacities of individuals are not as opposed as they might appear at first sight; rather they are different, but related facets of a dialectical process, establishing and transforming discourse:

... the creativity of the subject is socially determined in that creativity flourishes in certain social circumstances, when social struggles are constantly deconstructing orders of discourse.³⁹

However, ideology working through discourse remains the favoured, most effective vehicle for rule by consent; Fairclough argues that 'ideology is most effective when its workings are least visible'⁴⁰, when it is naturalised and its arbitrariness is no longer apparent. This ideological common sense becomes hegemonic and is no longer one way among a number of ways of seeing things, a range of representations. With the effacing of competing discourses, a hegemonic discourse can thus be seen as natural, quite simply because it is the way of doing things. This hegemony in maintaining consensus in political debates and agenda-setting is described in operation by various media scholars:

³⁷ Gramsci, A. (1971) *Prison Notebooks* London: Lawrence and Wishart

³⁸ *ibid* (note 35) p.93

³⁹ *ibid* (note 35) p.172

⁴⁰ *ibid* (note 35) p.85

... through the discourses of television news a new version of the same social model is constructed every day, contributing to the maintenance and perpetuation of a political and economic order.⁴¹

Sites of discourse

In the present dissertation, however, I am concerned with representations produced in two discursive systems, those of the planning system and the press. I take these as two sets of knowledge, the latter drawing heavily on the former. These are systems governed by ideologies in which professional and bureaucratic standards and goals are a significant feature. The 'real world' is the point of reference for both of my sets of documents. However, as with much public discourse, I take it that the ultimate underlying reference of my text corpora is the doublet normality / abnormality. Both types of professionally produced discourse studied here can be read on the basis that they can be checked against real, logically assembled facts and figures. What I am trying to examine is how a policy and places, State actions and individuals can be known. Chapter 5 has the goal of exploring the representations, the ways of knowing present in two forms of institutionalised discourse, produced by reliable knowers. With the development of terminologies and narrative techniques (which it is the task of the discourse analyst to explore), a particular facet of the real world becomes knowable through representations.

Discursive conventions and symbolic space

Before moving to some of the criticisms of C.D.A., I would like to sketch out some of the discursive conventions used by the knowers as they create text in the contemporary professional discourses studied here. Both discursive systems, in creating the text which provides a foundation for professional identities, face issues concerning the appropriate display of discourse on material supports. Both planning discourse and to a lesser extent media discourse (at least in a western context), share commitments to objectivity. Whereas, however, the media in general are involved with a narrative frame of quasi-simultaneous events, the planning professionals' reports are concerned with the coherence of a narrative, with projections for the future. In both cases, however, the real world of people and events are the support for strategies of narrative. And in both cases, the narrative and rhetorical strategies create symbolic spaces well 'distinct in character from the local or private worlds of the

⁴¹ Jenson, K.B. (1987) 'News as ideology: economic statistics and political ritual in TV network news', p.8 in *Journal of Communication*, 37 (1) pp.8-27

audience'.⁴² Both the discursive samples studied here are produced for the public domain, for consumption remote from the knowers, although at very different scales: the discourse of planners, despite its huge potential influence on the actual material conditions of existence, has an extremely restricted audience.

Nevertheless, I will be dealing with two forms of representation in the public domain - which may tell us things about the nature of public and professional communication in modernity in a specific urban, political context. I take it that the discursive systems analysed are part of what J.B. Thompson calls the mediatization of modernity,

... the general process by which the transmission of symbolic forms becomes increasingly mediated by the technical and institutional apparatuses of the media industries.⁴³

Through this mediatization, a form of community can be created, 'with common means of entertainment, a cast of public figures, and a discourse of citizenship'.⁴⁴ These communities have been made possible by the increasing availability of information in various ephemeral forms - which represent a fundamental change in the nature of inter-personal communication.

Interpreting discursive effects

However, in this dissertation, I am concerned to see how particular, locally specific forms of discourse come to seem persuasive. Following Golding, I take it that:

... the apparatus of cultural manufacture and distribution is such as to provide explanations, symbols and rhetoric which make the social order appear both inevitable and just.⁴⁵

⁴² Chaney, D. (1993) *Fictions of Collective Life: public drama in late modern culture* London: Routledge, p.139

⁴³ Thomson, J.B. (1990) *Ideology and Modern Culture: critical social theory in the era of mass communication* Cambridge: Polity, pp.3-4

⁴⁴ *ibid* (note 44) p.121

⁴⁵ Golding, P. (1981) 'The missing dimensions - news media and the management of social change' in E. Katz and T. Szeckko (eds) (1981) *Mass Media and Social Change* Newbury Park: Sage, p.63

Representations are therefore to be seen as cultural products, and I take it as one of the tasks of the discourse analyst to question the adequacy of representations. As J.B. Thompson puts it:

'Reconnecting discourse to the relations of domination which it serves to sustain: such is the task of interpretation'.⁴⁶

My reading of discourses is thus based on a Foucauldian notion of power as a pervasive force - rather than a force of prohibition - within society, inextricably linked to modernity's push for ever more precise forms of control through regulatory techniques. By using the concept of discourse to tackle text, I am focusing on the multiplicity of genres of representations, working in different discursive systems - to different effects not always foreseeable. This is an approach which admits the weight of disembodied power, circulating through the mechanisms of modernity⁴⁷, flowing through labyrinths of language as used to construct facts and versions:

We should admit that power produces knowledge ... That power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute ... power relations.⁴⁸

Foucault has been much criticised for his approach to power: the standard argument against it runs that since, according to Foucault, power is everywhere, resistance is impossible. What is important, however, is that the dispersed form of identities, also put forward by Foucault, allows for the possibility of resistance.

Essentially, the work of Michel Foucault is important to the present dissertation for the notion of discourse. To summarise, I take discourse as a domain of language use creating constraints and permitting what can be said and thought. I use the term system of discourse to refer to a specific language domain - although I accept that it is often difficult to draw precise boundaries between these domains. A speaker may be

⁴⁶ Thompson, J.B. (1984) *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* Cambridge: Polity Press, p.137

⁴⁷ On this see Miller, P. and Rose, N. (1993) 'Governing economic life', in M. Gane and T. Johnson (eds) *Foucault's New Domains* London: Routledge, pp.75-105. See for example p.83: '... apparently humble and mundane mechanisms which appear to make it possible to govern: techniques of notation, computation and calculation; procedures of examination and assessment; the invention of devices such as surveys and representational forms such as tables; the standardisation of systems for training and the inculcation of habits; the inauguration of professional specialisms and vocabularies; building design and architectural forms - the list is heterogeneous and is, in principle, unlimited'.

⁴⁸ Foucault, Michel (1980) *Power / Knowledge* Brighton: Harvester Press, p.27

competent, i.e. able to operate without difficulty, in a number of systems of discourse, possibly in more than one language. These discourses may arise from a variety of knowledge domains and language types, including dialects, specific slang, professional language, technical jargon and 'high' or classical forms of language. Elements of any one system of discourse may be inserted into another, for various reasons, and usage, time, place, speaker / audience relations will all contribute to endow an utterance, a piece of discourse with meaning.

Thus in this dissertation, I will attempt to analyse elements of two written discursive systems. I will provide background on the historical conditions which make possible the particular discursive construction of the empirical issue under consideration. Before this, however, I move on to chapter 3 and a close examination of a number of pieces of discourse related research. First, however, a look at 'the emptiness of critical discourse analysis'. Before going further, I feel it is important to note some of the criticisms levelled at this form of socio-linguistic research within the academy.

2.4 The emptiness of C.D.A.?

Critical discourse analysis expanded considerably in the 1990s - and became the object of debates on approach and method within its growing 'user community'. The nascent discipline - essentially concerned with the use of suitable linguistic apparatus to bring to light the ideologies at work in text taken in wider socio-historical contexts - has come under fire for a number of reasons. Although supporting a form of discourse analysis, Stubbs⁴⁹ is particularly severe: discourse analysis 'derives its strength only negatively, from its criticisms of formal grammar'⁵⁰, and 'is often mere fact-gathering with no clear methods and theories'. Another criticism of C.D.A. mentioned by Stubbs is that 'it rarely analyses whole texts'.⁵¹ He considers that the way forward is via the comparative analysis of grammatical patterns present in entire books or text corpora - an approach now possible thanks to the availability and accessibility of new software.

Potter, on the other hand, goes for the basic principle:

⁴⁹ Stubbs, M. (1996) *Text and Corpus Analysis* Oxford: Blackwell. See in particular pp.128-29

⁵⁰ *ibid* (note 49) p. 128

⁵¹ *ibid* (note 49) p. 129

The central Critical Discourse Analysis idea that causal processes are properly represented by the base form of a sentence but mystified by the transformed form is also problematic.⁵²

The supposed purity of the 'base form' is a conclusion - not the result of a demonstration, in much C.D.A. Although sentences which make use of certain linguistic forms may distract from certain aspects of an issue, this certainly 'does not mean that the base sentences are any better or more radical or more real.'⁵³ Not all the features and implications of a text may be revealable by purely linguistic analysis. As Potter puts it, discourse analysis:

... tends to a cognitive and strategic analysis, heavily dependent on what speakers intend and on the information processing difficulties generated by some constructions.⁵⁴

Joining Potter's conclusions, in a recent paper on place names and identity in Aotearoa / New Zealand, Berg and Kearns highlight what they feel to be the crucial methodological weaknesses of C.D.A.:

The notion of 'method' is itself the product of a positivist discursive framework which constructs an acceptable set of procedures that lead to the 'discovery of truth'.⁵⁵

Taking this as a point of departure, there are a number of implications for would-be discourse analysts: they must be very well informed, and aware that there is no recipe, either for proceeding with textual analyses or guiding the use of contextual knowledge. Ultimately, the above criticisms are useful because in the present piece of work, I am interested in versions and actions; the upshot of the remarks briefly discussed above is that effective criticism may eventually be possible through extremely rigorous analysis.

⁵² Potter, J. (1996) *Representing Reality* Newbury Park: Sage, p.227

⁵³ *ibid* (note 52) p.226

⁵⁴ *ibid* (note 52) p.227

⁵⁵ Berg, L.D. and Kearns, R.A. (1996) "'Race", gender and the identity politics of naming places' p.101 in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 1996, 14, pp.99-122

So before looking at some approaches adopted by discourse analysts in the next chapter, I would like to turn, briefly, to outline the main principles underpinning the present dissertation. I take it that the same matters and events can be discussed in a number of ways, but within the discourse, seen as the '*signification system* that governs, controls and produces knowledge in a culture'.⁵⁶ Linguistic, iconographic and grammatical choices may convey dominant meanings to readers; linguistic usage encodes representations of the world - and may have political consequences. I take it that differential ideological stances are directly related to the use of lexical and grammatical resources. Thus discourse analysis is concerned with semiotic technology at work.

To conclude this chapter on discourse and representation, I turn once more to the work of Michel Foucault, and a line from *La Volonté de savoir*:

For a long time, the story goes, we supported a Victorian régime, and we continued to be dominated by it even today.⁵⁷

Foucault's prose is often overly dense and opaque. Here, however, at the beginning of his *History of Sexuality*, he lays down how he is going to enable the reader to see through one of the great myths of the present time; he seeks to explore how pasts and persons are constructed. 'So the story goes ...': the phrase opens the way for critique - the recent term 'sexuality' has not brought in its wake the reality to which it refers. On the contrary,

... it means an effort to treat sexuality as the correlation of a domain of knowledge, a type of normativity and a mode of relation to self; it means trying to decipher how, in Western societies, a complex experience is constituted from and around certain forms of behaviour: an experience which conjoins a field of study (*connaissance*) (with its concepts, theories and diverse disciplines), a collection of rules (which differentiate the permissible from the forbidden, natural from monstrous, norma from pathological, ...)⁵⁸

⁵⁶ *ibid* (note 7) p.103. Berg and Kearns draw here on Michel Foucault (1984) *The Order of Discourse* in M. Shapiro (ed) *Language and Politics* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, pp.108-138

⁵⁷ Foucault, Michel (1984) 'We other Victorians' p.292, extract from *History of Sexuality I* New York: Pantheon Press in Paul Rabinow (ed) *The Foucault Reader* London: Penguin Group, pp.292-300 (original Foucault, M., 1976 *La Volonté de savoir* Paris: Gallimard)

Foucault is thus interested in the media in which people are constituted. Although concerned with history in the sense of facts about the past, his new readings - often criticized for their historical inaccuracy - are really more important for their challenge to the way historical research is conducted, for their challenge to many categories generally accepted. In *La Volonté de savoir*, Foucault is partly concerned with the conditions of present discourse on the past. In the next chapter, I open with this same concern to reveal myth - as found in the work of Roland Barthes.

⁵⁸ Foucault, Michel (1984) 'Preface' to *History of Sexuality II* (trans. W. Smock) London: Viking, quoted in P. Rabinow (ed) (1984) *The Foucault Reader* pp.333-34 London: Penguin Group, pp.333-339 (original Foucault, M., 1984 *L'Usage des plaisirs* Paris: Gallimard)

3

TURNING TO THE TEXT: SOME APPROACHES TO DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

As has been demonstrated in the preceding chapter, discourse analysis covers an extremely broad range of theoretical and thematic interests; research ranges from interactional conversation analysis to the reception of written text, covering lexis and grammar, rhetoric and codes, genre and context. I now move to examine a small sample of CDA work in relative detail, taking examples which relate well to the theoretical concerns and especially the principal themes of the discourse corpus of the present dissertation - namely the media, social deprivation, and government policy. Examples are mainly from the Anglophone academic world, but there is also a discussion of the early work of Roland Barthes and a couple of examples directly dealing with data from the Maghreb - Michel Camau on Tunisian political élites¹ and Khadija Zizi on the analysis of newspaper prose². As the focus of one of the two main substantive chapters is journalistic discourse - texts produced to inform the public about policy and persuade them of its effectiveness - I have given priority to research where various stories are framed in the media, the 'when' and 'what', 'why' and linguistic 'how' of representing an issue.

To set this chapter 3 firmly in its context, chapter 4, after examining the discursive context (the Tunisian Republic in the early 1990s) will then look at the 'when' and 'what' of a particular policy narrative (housing and a deprived group), while chapter 5 widens the perspective with an in depth look at a sample of the Tunisian State's discursive output, drawing on some of the tools and approaches discussed here.

Among the most ambitious accounts of the discursive workings of language examined here are Hodge and Kress on language and ideology³. Along with work by Fairclough and Van Dijk, this has provided a basis for much work in CDA. For their critique of neo-liberal positions in the United States of America, I look at Mehan on

¹ Camau, Michel (1972) 'Le discours politique de légitimité des élites tunisiennes' in *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord* X, pp.26-68 Paris

² Zizi, Khadija (1987) *Contrastive discourse analysis of argumentative and informative newspaper prose in Arabic, French and English: suggestions for teaching / learning English as a foreign language for journalistic purposes (EJP) in Morocco* unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana

³ Hodge, R. and Kress, G. (1979, 1993) *Language as ideology* London: Routledge

the illegal immigration debate⁴ and de Goede on poverty⁵. Other issue based research reviewed includes Brookes on constructions of 'Africa' in the British press⁶ and Meinhof and Richardson (eds) examinations of the discourse of poverty in Britain in the 1990s⁷ - important because of the attention paid to image as well as text, multiple voices as well as the authoritative writing of the journalist. Reference is also made to some of the emerging work on policy discourses in the UK and elsewhere - notably that of Hajer on environmental discourse and Dobbin on the metaphors of industrial policy⁸. Attention is paid to the specific 'tools' used by these analysts. Is discourse study a field which has 'a negative identity'⁹, 'mere fact gathering with no clear methods and theories'¹⁰? This question needed to be studied before I embarked on analysing a corpus of text myself. However, before moving into close focus on the techniques of what Fowler calls 'the linguistics of representation', an excursion in the mythical world of Roland Barthes, really a discourse analyst long before the term took hold in English.

3.1 Barthes and the construction of myth

Tunisia in the early 1990s began to discover the products and images of international capitalism on a big scale. Although never the 'Mediterranean tiger economy' it was vaunted to be in the local press, prosperity was clearly growing. Like the French in the 1950s, Tunisians are increasingly discovering the delights of

⁴ Mehan, Hugh (1997) 'The discourse of the illegal immigration debate: a case study in the politics of representation' in *Discourse and Society* 8, 2 (1997) pp.249-70

⁵ De Goede, Marieke (1996) 'Ideology in the US welfare debate: neo-liberal representations of poverty' in *Discourse and Society* 7, 3 (1996) pp.317-357

⁶ Brookes, Heather Jean (1995) '"Suite, tie and a touch of juju" - the ideological construction of Africa: a critical discourse analysis of news on Africa in the British press' in *Discourse and Society* 6, 4 (1995) pp.461-494

⁷ Meinhof, U. and Richardson, K. (1994) *Text, discourse and context* London and New York: Longman

⁸ Dobbin, F. (1992) 'Metaphors of industrial rationality: the social construction of electronics policy in the United States and France' in R. Wuthnow (ed) *Vocabularies of Public Life* London: Routledge pp.361-397

⁹ Frawley, W. (1987) Review article on T.A.van Dijk (ed) (1985) *Handbook of discourse analysis* London: Academic Press in *Language* 63 (2) (1987) pp.361-397 (p.361)

¹⁰ Stubbs, M. (1996) *Text and corpus analysis: computer assisted studies of language and culture* Oxford: Blackwell, p.128

consumer goods: modern advertising frame around Europe and the Middle East flows into homes on the satellite channels - the consumer durables follow as international firms set up plants and the association agreement with Europe takes effect. In the France of thirty years ago, it was Roland Barthes who, in a series of short newspaper essay documented the arrival of the new consumerism. (The series was later to be published as *Mythologies* by Le Seuil¹¹). I include this brief note on his work because his writing on myth represents a useful approach to objects, figures and social phenomena - important I feel in preparing the way for much subsequent work on language in society - and certainly important to me as I looked at the characters and events involved in the Oukala Project.

What Barthes is documenting in *Mythologies* are the 'things' of 1950s France. 'What pleased him in Michelet is the foundation of an ethnology of France, the desire and skill of questioning historically - i.e. *relatively* - those objects supposedly the most natural: face, food, clothes, complexion ... in his *Mythologies* it is France itself which is ethnographed.'¹² While the focus of the present dissertation is language, the representation of policy and people, the background is the destruction / rebuilding of the material city, the provision of that most familiar urban object, the family house, the creation of home. Drawing on Barthes, the myth of the desirable Tunisian home as it infuses planning documents and media reporting is a theme explored. Once a damp, female space, centred on the privacy of a courtyard¹³, the ideal Tunisian home has mutated: it has become an apartment or villa filled with consumer durables.

Barthes was to move from the study of objects to focus more closely on language. As Kristin Ross points out¹⁴, it is possible that he left behind his pot-pourri of myths, things and social phenomena because of the criticism of 'Le mythe aujourd'hui', the concluding essay to *Mythologies*, ultimately a piece of writing that fell between two stools, 'too linguistic for the mythological intuitions that precede it and which it attempts to explain; too open to the non-verbal - objects and images - to satisfy linguists.'¹⁵

¹¹ Barthes, Roland (1957) *Mythologies* Paris: Le Seuil

¹² Barthes, Roland (1977) *Roland Barthes* trans. R. Howard New York: Hill and Wang, p.84 (first published Paris: Le Seuil). Quoted in Ross, Kristin (1995) *Fast cars, clean bodies* Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, p.182

¹³ For this theoretical construction of traditional Tunisian domestic space see Zannad, T. (1984) *Symboliques corporelles et espaces musulmans* Tunis: Cérès Editions

¹⁴ Ross, Kristin (1995) *Fast cars, clean bodies* Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, pp.182

¹⁵ Ross, Kristin (note 14) pp.182-83

But it should really be stressed that this particular set of writings began merely as monthly essays (written between 1954 and 1956), partly inspired by a reading of Saussure, from which Barthes tells us that:

I was convinced that by examining "collective representations" as systems of signs it would be possible to move on from pious denunciation and provide a *detailed* account of the mystification which transforms petit bourgeois culture into universal nature¹⁶.

And as Barthes continues:

Semiological analysis, inaugurated at least as far as I am concerned by the final text of *Mythologies*, has developed, become more precise, complex, divided; it has become the theoretical place where, in this century and our West, a certain liberation from the signifier may be played out. I could not then, in their old form, (here present) write new mythologies¹⁷.

Nevertheless, several of Barthes' fluent accounts of the everyday world have been inspirational in the present study - notably his piece on 'the official vocabulary of African affairs' ('Grammaire africaine'¹⁸) 'Photogénie électorale'¹⁹ (on representations of politicians at election time), and the 'beautiful images' of the Orient seen through ethnographers' eyes in 'Continent perdu'.²⁰

Barthes' insights into the workings of contemporary society were of key importance, however. He is quite clear about myth being a system of communication', which needed to be examined in terms of historic limits and conditions of use. Myth is defined by 'an interesting game of hide and seek between meaning and form'. And in the creation of myth; it is not only the written or spoken languages which are important, for '... image is certainly more imperative than writing, it imposes meaning immediately, without analysing it, without dispersing it.'²¹

¹⁶ Barthes, Roland (note 11) 'Forward, February 1970', p.7 My translation.

¹⁷ Barthes, Roland (note 11) 'Forward, February 1970', p.7 My translation.

¹⁸ *ibid* (note 11) pp.137-144

¹⁹ *ibid* (note 11) pp.160-163

²⁰ *ibid* (note 11) pp.163-165

²¹ *ibid* (note 11) p.193

Tellingly, a mythic concept has a vast range of resources at its disposition:

... an unlimited mass of signifiers ... I can find a thousand images which signify French imperialism to me. This means that in quantitative terms, the concept is much poorer than the signifier, it is often only re-presented.²²

And he continues:

This repetition of the concept through different forms is precious for the mythologist, it allows the myth to be deciphered: it is the insistence of a (form of) conduct which reveals its intention.²³

Barthes sets the phenomena he has explored in their socio-cultural framework, that of bourgeois society, for which 'myth is the depoliticised word' (*la parole dépolitisée*)²⁴, with political to be understood 'in the deeper sense of the term, as all human relationships in their real social structure, in their power to make the world'.²⁵

So how does myth operate? Although it has great resources available to it, myth is not obviously mystificatory. In fact, it speaks out simply 'giving to things a clarity which is not that of explanation, but rather that of reporting, acknowledgement'.²⁶ It moves effortlessly from history to nature,

it abolishes the complexity of human acts, giving them the simplicity of essences, and suppressing all dialectics, any rise to the surface of anything not immediately visible.²⁷

The result is that things come to seem to have meaning all by themselves.

Essential to the functioning of myth is what Barthes calls a meta-language, a second language 'which is to the first language what a gesture is to an act'.²⁸ This is the place

²² *ibid* (note 11) p.195

²³ *ibid* (note 11) p.195

²⁴ *ibid* (note 11) p.205

²⁵ *ibid* (note 11) p.205

²⁶ *ibid* (note 11) p.230

²⁷ *ibid* (note 11) p.230

where myth establishes itself, takes root. However, on the exact mechanics of how myth operates in meta-language, Barthes is never specific. (Who is qualified to interpret it?) There are indications, of course, in certain of the pieces in *Mythologies* (he examines the lexis and phraseology of French policy in Africa in some detail, for instance). But in the end, he is quite open about the exploratory nature of the enterprise:

The social geography of myths will remain difficult to establish as long as we lack an analytic sociology of the press. But it might be said that its place already exists.²⁹

This sociology of the media has developed as an academic field in its own right over the last three decades. The production and reception of media discourse in all its variety are tackled at varying levels of analysis, from individual journalists to texts, producer institutions and audience groups. However, the sketch of the main rhetorical forms of bourgeois myth provided by Barthes back in the 1950s still have relevance for today's media scholar: 'fixed, regulated insistent figures'³⁰ such as The Vaccine 'which consists in confessing an incidental ill of a class institution in order to better mark the main ill'³¹ and The Suppression of History by which 'Myth deprives the object of which it speaks of any history'.³²

In a later work, *Sade / Loyola / Fourier* (1976)³³, Barthes has moved on from myth to codes of language. Writing on the Marquis de Sade, he tells us that 'the erotic code benefits totally from the logic of language, manifested through the artifices of syntax and rhetoric.'³⁴ Barthes notes the terrible repetitiousness of the Marquis' work - ultimately tedious - stressing that 'Sade always chooses the discourse over the

²⁸ *ibid* (note 11) p.230

²⁹ *ibid* (note 11) p.233

³⁰ *ibid* (note 11) p.238

³¹ *ibid* (note 11) p.238

³² *ibid* (note 11) p.238

³³ Barthes, R. (1976) *Sade / Loyola / Fourier* translated by Richard Miller Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press (French original 1971, Paris: Le Seuil)

³⁴ *ibid* (note 33) p.32

referent; he always sides with *semiosis* rather than *mimesis*.³⁵ Which is surely the case of much of the myths enshrined in media and political discourse too.

But Barthes was also very clear on the contingent, shifting nature of myth. He felt that myths matured and spread, that it should be possible to define the 'social region' of a myth. But 'as this region is shifting, it would be better to speak of waves of implementation of the myth.'³⁶

To leap forward a couple of chapters, the present study is concerned with the strengthening of deeply entrenched myth, that of the patriarchal, effective, androcentric State, benefiting from the logic of a particularly unusual (to the European eye) media code. The time frame of the study, 1990 to 1996, but with references back to the 1960s, means a focus on a particular wave, a surge in the building of this particular myth.

3.2 Dissecting the language of myth 1: some approaches to political discourse

Media and political discourse appear inextricably entwined, the former essential to the propagation of the more restricted discourse circulating in policy documents and committee room discussions. The media (in English at least), tends to turn 'newsworthy' political events and concerns into *stories*, developed and sustained, sometimes for a few days, at other times recurring over a period of years. It follows then that any analysis of myth, political or otherwise, must attempt a description of how it is actually narrated. Traditionally, in newsrooms across the Anglo-Saxon world, there is a split in news, hard versus soft, a divide felt to be created by the very nature of the events and persons to be displayed for public consumption. Nevertheless, as Bird and Dardenne³⁷ point out:

This perception blinds us to the way narrative devices are used in all news writing, maintaining the illusion that the structural devices used in hard news are merely neutral techniques that act as conduit for events to become

³⁵ *ibid* (note 33) p.37

³⁶ *ibid* (note 11) pp.237-238

³⁷ Bird, S.E. and Dardenne, R.W. (1997) 'Myth, chronicle and story. Exploring the narrative qualities of news' in D. Berkowitz (ed) *Social meanings of news* Newbury Park: Sage, pp.333-350

information, rather than ways in which a particular kind of narrative text is created.

What to look for then, as a researcher exploring the 'narrative qualities' of news? Bird and Dardenne provide a few pointers. They note a number of features close to traditional storytelling: the use of archetypal tales, the 'resonance' ('the feeling that we have written or read the same stories over and over again'³⁸), which is responsible for a great deal of the mythical quality. And the 'news values'³⁹ which are there to be sniffed out and developed by the experienced journalist. These values are summed up with lapidary simplicity by Chibnall, they emphasise 'The Present, The Unusual, The Dramatic, Simplicity, Actions, Personalisation, and Results'⁴⁰. Stories can thus be read in a larger frame, individual but transitory elements in a thematic area developed by a channel or a paper for a segment of the public. Out of the millions of events occurring daily across the world, coherent discourses are created.

However, as Bird and Dardenne so rightly note, 'much of news can hardly be called "story" in any accepted sense.'⁴¹ We move then to the world of the unremarkable, the routine, the domain of 'the chronicle' as opposed to the more exciting, glamorous 'story'. The boundary between the two is not of course fixed: a *fait divers* may exhibit enough drama and strangeness to become story-worthy; a story may be downgraded to chronicle. The determining factors are of course numerous and varied: sociocultural perspective and (supposed) reader / audience prior knowledge and availability of material counts for much. What else could explain, for instance, how the appalling massacres in the 1990s so rarely made it out of the 'Foreign Notes' column to informed reporting, in the British press, at least?

We thus have two main forms, closely connected, in English language print-media discourse. There is the tale, generally using the inverted pyramid to give structure to its narrative, and the more stylized accounts of everyday, chronicle news. But slippage occurs back to the tale with the 'humanization' of otherwise insignificant events.

³⁸ *ibid* (note 37) p.338

³⁹ *ibid* (note 37) p.338

⁴⁰ Chibnall, S. (1981) 'The production of knowledge by crime reporters' in S. Cohen and J. Young (eds) *The manufacture of news: social problems, deviance, and the mass media* London: Constable pp.75-97, quoted in S.E. Bird and R.W. Dardenne (note 1) p.335

⁴¹ *ibid* (note 37) p.339

Bird and Dardenne consider that the study of the narrative qualities of news 'enables us to look more critically at whose values are encoded in news.'⁴² The implications for scholars of the media are clear: they are to be privileged interpreters of values contained in text and images - a potentially difficult task should the researcher in question themselves have a particular set of values to promote.

In one important respect, however, journalists are closer to the storytellers of the past than might be suspected. Very often they are in the position of recounting things of which the audience cannot possibly have any direct experience. Here the writer / producers have to fit the new material into the existing frameworks, assigning roles to new characters and ordering events.⁴³

Which leads me to perhaps the most important insight of Bird and Dardenne's paper: news is held to tell us about cultural values. To view news as narrative representing culture 'allows us to study it as a symbolic model of cultural values.'⁴⁴ What is missing at this point is a more in-depth method of tackling the 'narrative qualities' of news text. If news and other text has different objectives and values across different cultures, attention to the detail of the image and language in use has been seen by many researchers to be the way to understanding these values.

Barthes' piece on the grammar of French African policy ('and official vocabulary ... which has no communicative value, merely the power of intimidation ... it is a language responsible for making norms and facts coincide.'⁴⁵) is an early example of what has become the wide-ranging discipline of political discourse analysis. A good review of this 'discipline' is provided by John Gastil in a 1992 article in *Discourse and Society*.⁴⁶ Outlining the techniques employed by political discourse scholars to dissect their often rather opaque material, Gastil's essay is underpinned by the notion that political discourse analysis 'should identify the inadequacies of existing discourse

⁴² *ibid* (note 37) p.344

⁴³ Gay issues, for example, have no place in the Tunisian press, simply because the socio-cultural construct 'gay community' has no local presence; this community can appear as the property of foreign countries, with articles sometimes lifted / translated from the French media.

⁴⁴ *ibid* (note 37) p.341

⁴⁵ Barthes, Roland (1957) *Mythologies* Paris: Le Seuil, p.137

⁴⁶ Gastil, John (1992) 'Undemocratic discourse: a review of theory and research on political discourse' in *Discourse and Society* 3(4), pp.469-500

relative to an ideal model of democratic deliberation.⁴⁷ Essentially, the academic work on political 'talk' reviewed by Gastil has gone about identifying 'ways in which discourse can facilitate or - more typically - obstruct the democratic process.'⁴⁸

Four main areas of focus in political discourse analysis (P.D.A.) are identified by Gastil: lexicon, grammar, rhetorical strategies and conversational tactics. The work in each of these areas is reviewed in terms of their how, why and to what effect. The article is not, however, looking at writers relating their analysis to wider socio-linguistic theory, at research practices where the description is based on (say) a Hallidayan model of lexico-grammar.

To start with lexicon. The control of vocabulary, as Orwell understood, has huge implications for régimes of all kinds. The creators of Newspeak had developed a carefully designed agglutination of prefixes to master shades of meaning. And as Fowler⁴⁹ so rightly points out, vocabulary guides us to:

... the preoccupations of a culture. Detailed systems of terms develop for the areas of expertise, the features of habitat, the institutions and relationships, and the beliefs and values of a community.

Beyond vocabulary, a number of related areas of focus are grouped together under the lexicon banner: technical words, imprecise words, euphemisms and loaded words. On reading Gastil's account of work in these areas, one is struck by the amount of overlap between them: a technical word can almost be considered imprecise if its function is to mystify - and it can easily assume the misleading qualities of the euphemism. Perhaps the key notion to retain from the discussion here is the slippery nature of meaning as words move from one genre, one context to another: the political watchword *tolérance / tasammuh* in the Tunisian political context (a homogeneous, mono-ethnic national community) does not have the same weight as in multiconfessional Lebanon or Egypt; 'inner city' - not a term easily translateable into even a close language like (say) French - originally a British planners' shorthand term for deprived central urban areas, has come to take on a heavy semantic load in the UK media. To return to Tunisia, the change of régime of November 1987 brought the

⁴⁷ *ibid* (note 46) p.469

⁴⁸ *ibid* (note 46) p.473

⁴⁹ Fowler, R. (1985) 'Power', p.65 in T.A. van Dijk (ed) *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, vol. 4 London: Academic Press, pp.61-83

term *le Changement* / *at-taghyir* or *at-tahawwul* into the political lexicon. But is change still change ten years after the event in question? Underlexicalisation can also be extremely revealing on occasion too.

An examination of grammar, as Gastil points out, enables the researcher to get at 'the ways in which political speakers form sentences and position words within them.'⁵⁰ So far so good - but the field is vast and the perspectives multiple as Gastil reviews work drawing on speech act theory ('language is sometimes closer to action than assertion'⁵¹), or research focusing on the mechanics of implicature, syntactic devices, selective pronoun usage and naming conventions. The interest of speech act theory is in fact more fully covered in Stubbs 1996 *Text and corpus analysis*⁵². The insight to retain is that institutional speakers' - and so writers' - force is derived from their institutional position.

Gastil examines the work of Holly (1989)⁵³ and Wilson (1990)⁵⁴ on the subtle workings of *implicature*. This would seem to be akin to studying how politicians use certain features of language to establish and maintain their credibility (and destroy that of others). Holly identifies two chief forms of implicature: the running board technique, in which the key part of the meaning 'gets to its destination, but isn't allowed to sit in the car'⁵⁵, i.e. the audience must infer much from what appears to be a minor aside; secondly, there is the phantom meaning technique, similar to the 'running board', except in this case the real meaning is pretence, barely masking a more sinister or challenging meaning. Also under the heading of implicature, Gastil notes rhetorical questions - although this is perhaps better taken as a rhetorical strategy.

Implicature, as 'leading the audience to infer that', is seen as 'an invaluable tool for making relatively tenuous arguments and placing the world within a preferred

⁵⁰ *ibid* (note 46) p.479

⁵¹ *ibid* (note 46) p.479

⁵² Stubbs, M. (1996) *Text and corpus analysis: computer assisted studies of language and culture* Oxford: Blackwell

⁵³ Holly, W. (1989) 'Credibility and political language' in R. Wodak (ed) *Language, power and ideology* Amsterdam: John Benjamins, pp.115-35

⁵⁴ Wilson, J. (1990) *Politically speaking* Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell

⁵⁵ *ibid* (note 53) p.123 quoted in Gastil (note 10) p.480

ideological frame.'⁵⁶ Nonetheless, there is always room for the challenging of this preferred reading: possible inferences are numerous. Any misreadings (from the utterer's point of view) may not have much impact on the wider scheme of things, argues Holly⁵⁷, since 'repetition and variation of forms will compensate for the occasional failure.'

Syntax is perhaps the most complex issue discussed by Gastil, although only a page is devoted to it. The devices mentioned or discussed include 'complexity, generics, sequencing, the passive tense, the deletion of the subject, nominalization, negation and agency.'⁵⁸ Among the work briefly reviewed is a piece by the WADAUG group⁵⁹ identifying the syntactic characteristics of George Bush's speeches: the general or vague language of this politician would seem to have very similar effects as the complexity often held to be a feature of jargon, political or otherwise: it is confusing and misleading for audiences.

One of the main books referred to by Gastil is the 1979 *Language as ideology* by Hodge and Kress⁶⁰ (since republished, 1993, with the addition of a chapter entitled 'Reading power' which focuses on English language texts dealing with the 1991 conflict in the Arabian Gulf). Hodge and Kress, in their wide ranging account of language in use, are mentioned by Gastil for their discussion of a number of syntactic strategies, including negation, nominalization, the pragmatic use of pronouns and naming conventions. (Below I provide a fuller account of some aspects of this important book). Suffice to say for the moment that the features just mentioned all have their role to play in the building and enforcement of political discourse.

The third theme identified by Gastil as running through contemporary analyses of political discourse is that of rhetorical strategies, which, exploiting as they must the resources of lexicon and grammar, 'transcend the level of phrasing and sentence structure'.⁶¹ Gastil sees four main strategies as being studied by political discourse analysts: integrative complexity, rituals, metaphors and myths.

⁵⁶ *ibid* (note 46) p.481

⁵⁷ *ibid* (note 53) p.124 quoted in Gastil (note 46) p.481

⁵⁸ *ibid* (note 46) p.482

⁵⁹ WADAUG (1990) 'The rhetorical construction of a President' in *Discourse and society* 1(2), pp.189-200

⁶⁰ Hodge, R. and Kress, G. (1979, 1993) *Language as ideology* London: Routledge

Integrative complexity has its opposite in integrative simplicity. The terms derive from political psychology, and the focus issue here is the way different perspectives can be brought together in political talk. (At the other end of the spectrum is the exclusionary simplicity of much political talk). A good deal of this talk, however, is ritualistic, performed / displayed on major occasions focusing the fears and aspirations of a group. Ritual discourse is important in all polities - and emerges as a potent element in the presentation of policy in the Tunisian context, as will be seen later. It is a vital part of building a political environment - as are metaphors and myth.

Metaphors, if well chosen, 'can create benchmarks that shape popular judgements of the success or failure of specific programmes'.⁶² They can naturalise policies, make them appear as the best solutions, and demonise opponents. Metaphors of war ('fighting through the jungle of the city') and sport ('it's a whole different ballgame') are pervasive in late twentieth century English, related to the underlying trope of the health of the group / business / society striving toward the state of the lean, competitive body. (Why resources need to be competed for so 'fiercely' in a society plainly capable of producing so much is passed under silence - but such is the power of metaphor.)

Myth, as identified by Gastil in recent PDA work, has similar properties to implicature, broadly speaking, the capacity to reinforce weak lines of argument. Edelman⁶³ provides a succinct summary of this most useful of strategies:

From the beginnings of recorded history to the present day, governments have won the support of large numbers of their citizens for policies that were based upon delusions: beliefs in witches, in non-existent internal and external enemies, or in the efficacy of laws to regulate private power, cope with destitution, guarantee civil rights, or rehabilitate criminals.

President Reagan is widely seen as having used myth and anecdote to great effect - as have many other leaders (the civilising mission of the France, the push to unity of the Arab nation, the common European home are but a handful of examples).

⁶¹ *ibid* (note 46) p.487

⁶² Edelman, M. (1977) *Political language* New York: Academic Press, p.36 quoted in Gastil (note 10) p.488

⁶³ *ibid* (note 62) p.3 quoted in Gastil (note 46) p.489

President Bourguiba of Tunisia, 'father of the nation' was (as a former lawyer) a particular master of the genre, building himself a heroic status tempered by personage of the wily son of the people, full of ruses - *hallouf* in everyday language. Many anecdotes circulated to illustrate his intelligence: years after the October War of 1973, it was recounted how Bourguiba had decided to send Tunisian troops to fight alongside their Arab brethren. But as they marched southwards from the capital, these troops were so warmly received in every town on their route that they were forced to stop the night by the jubilant populace. The result was that the Arab armies were routed long before Tunisian troops got anywhere near the front. The President's image as wise and wily leader is thus held to be enhanced by the tellers of this anecdote: Arab solidarity had been maintained, but no Tunisian blood had been shed. And in another piece of political myth reinforcement, pundits of all persuasions could be heard quoting a speech by Bourguiba made at Jericho in the 1960s, when he stressed that the only solution to the Middle East problem was mutual recognition and negotiation between Palestinians and Israelis. I quote these two examples at length as good illustrations of the powerful yet anecdotic character of political myth making.

An exploration of the content and narrative features at work in a news story or political speech can convey a multitude of linguistic and textual elements. It is also evident that there is a huge range in the scale, detail and use of possible theoretical grounding by writers in this field. (Gastil's paper, for example, makes no mention of research into the mechanics of para-linguistic features linked to text, but then this is an area where new work has appeared since publication of the article). Many of these features are held by analysts to reduce the complexity of real life political situations, concealing diversity of perspective and interests. But a number of methodological questions still remain. The linguistic features of text can be described - but what about the reception of text?⁶⁴ As Gastil puts it, 'it is necessary to distinguish intentional implicature from that which is the product of creative hearers (and critics)⁶⁵. Description is thus but a crucial first step - but here the range of approaches and areas of focus on offer makes comparison problematic. Gastil sees a way round this by the use of the structurational model, quoting Giddens remark that:

Structures of signification always have to be grasped in connection with domination and legitimation.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ For this see Meinhof, U. and Richardson, K. (1994) *Text, discourse and context: representations of poverty in Britain* London: Longman

⁶⁵ *ibid* (note 46) p.493

So the crucial issue still remains one of how to undertake systematic analysis of naturally occurring text, interpreting its characteristics to see how attitudes are created and maintained. I now move to look at the methods proposed in Hodge and Kress ambitious account⁶⁷ of the links between linguistic and social practice, presenting something of Halliday's work on text as 'information system' along the way. This in turn prepares the way for the detailed examination of the methods used in some recent, issue-focused CDA work.

3.3 Dissecting the language of myth 2: Hodge and Kress - a further look at the syntactic dimension and some social semantics

An examination now of one of the most significant accounts exploring the workings of language in society, Hodge and Kress' *Language and ideology*, (1979), republished in an expanded version in 1993. Of the work which has contributed to the development of critical linguistics, I consider this to be one of the most significant, an account of the relationships between 'linguistic processes and their ideological motivations'.⁶⁸ It is an important work because it represented one of the first (and most extensive) attempts to tackle the subject, important to the present dissertation in terms of the methodology proposed. As the authors note in the preface to the 1993 edition, their work had an impact on scholars in many disciplines, on people who wanted 'more and better descriptions of language, while staying well short of the full apparatus of the technical linguistics of the day.'⁶⁹

In this sub-section I will attempt an account of some of the major lines of approach taken by Hodge and Kress towards language. Particularly important is the chapter, 'Reading power', (added in the 1993 edition), which stresses two key features of the authors' project:

the concern with power as the condition of social life, and the need for a theory of language which incorporates this as a major presence.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Giddens, A. (1984) *The constitution of society* Berkeley: University of California Press, p.31 quoted in Gastil (note 10) p.493

⁶⁷ *ibid* (note 60)

⁶⁸ Hodge, R. and Kress, G. (1993) *Language as ideology* London: Routledge, p.17

⁶⁹ *ibid* (note 68) p.x

⁷⁰ *ibid* (note 68) p.x

Other major accounts of language and ideology followed Hodge and Kress' work - notably Fairclough's 1992 *Discourse and social change*⁷¹ and J.B. Thompson's 1984 *Studies in the theory of ideology*⁷². *Language and ideology* remains helpful and important, however, for its detailed analysis and discussion of actual text samples.

Chapter 2 of *Language and ideology*, entitled 'Transformations and truth', takes as its starting point the surface structures of language. The chapter seeks to explore the ideological effects of the shifts in surface form and structure. But as the authors make clear, their approach to transformational processes in language differs significantly from that provided by Chomsky (a full discussion is provided⁷³). The interest of examining transformational processes is to reveal how there lies, at the heart of this process, the exclusion of one version of events, the privileging of another. The basic assumption, (different from that of many linguists), is that the truth is problematic, that the underlying form, when reached, is still only a hypothetical form.

Hodge and Kress, in analysing a *Guardian* newspaper editorial on the effects of the miners' strike of 1972-73, start with the transactive sentence model (x does y to z), a model where there is 'an *actor*, the *verbal process* and an *affected entity*'⁷⁴. Given that the editorial writer 'is concerned with clearly establishing causes and causal relations, then the transactive is the best model for the job'⁷⁵. However, the editorial only contains five instances of this model - and in three of these, abstract nouns (*nominalizations*⁷⁶ of a verbal process), were the agent of the clause. More significant, in the text under study, all the transactive clauses concern actions by the miners, or seen as their responsibility. The effect is to minimize the active capacity of the government.

Similar ideological process is at work in the creation of nominalizations. The use of the noun 'picketing' in the sentence 'Picketing curtailed coal deliveries' not only elides the real actors (those doing the picketing and those delivering) but also blurs the time

⁷¹ Fairclough, Norman (1992) *Discourse and social change* Cambridge: Polity Press

⁷² Thompson, J.B. (1984) *Studies in the theory of ideology* Cambridge: Polity Press

⁷³ *ibid* (note 68) pp.29-33

⁷⁴ *ibid* (note 68) p.19

⁷⁵ *ibid* (note 68) p.19

⁷⁶ *nominalizations*: in linguistics, 'sentences, or parts of sentences, descriptions of actions and the participants involved in them, turned into nouns, or nominals' *ibid* (note 1) p.20

frame, as verbs in English on the whole have to be placed in time. To this double contraction of meaning is added the semantics of the verb 'curtailed': not as much coal is delivered as before - how much less remains unclear. The full version of this sentence, in its 'surface form' consisting of three entities clearly related to each other, would read according to Hodge and Kress⁷⁷, something like:

[Miners] picket [mines and coal depots so that rail drivers do not] deliver as much coal as before [the start of the dispute to the power stations]

And they continue:

This paraphrase contains so much more material than the concise actual surface form that readers would be forced to reflect on too many of the variables in the dispute.

The effects of the collapsing of complex actions into simple, terse sentences are of course significant. ('We choose our words carefully when something is at stake, and we need time for this.'⁷⁸) In the editorial under study, the miners' withdrawal from work is presented by the writer as the only direct, unqualified action. There is another syntactic feature, however, apart from nominalization used to deal with physical process in this text: the agentless passive. ('The Government has been much criticized'; 'the three-day week was announced'). And as with nominalizations, the agent is deleted - and the reader cannot always be sure of identifying the specific agent responsible. And even when it seems that the agent can be easily identified ('... essential maintenance on the pits is done on overtime'), the elimination of the miners concerned reflects an ideological stance (what was the standpoint of the miners on overtime?). The nominalization of maintenance also has the effect of providing a noun to which the judgemental adjective 'essential' can be attached - who it is that judges what constitutes the necessary maintenance can remain safely anonymous.

Hodge and Kress thus point to some significant ways in which linguistic processes can function together 'to alter the way in which a reader meets the material and tend to structure ... interpretations in specific ways.'⁷⁹ As they point out:⁸⁰

⁷⁷ *ibid* (note 68) p.22

⁷⁸ *ibid* (note 68) p.25

⁷⁹ *ibid* (note 68) p.28

... the full interpretation of transformed utterances is normally an unstable, perhaps idiosyncratic, resolution of the different levels of interpretation. That is interpretation probably involves a kind of double vision, whereby the underlying structures are both seen and not seen, or 'seen' and not heard.

Interpreting language habits and categories for the world

Hodge and Kress devote a whole chapter to the categorization of the world, opening with a quotation⁸¹ from Sapir's groundbreaking *Language: an introduction to the study of speech*:

... the fact of the matter is that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group ... We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation.⁸²

For Sapir and Whorf, there are deep-rooted, 'common-sense' assumptions about the world built into any language, functioning on a level far below the conscious. These assumptions help constitute the world view available to the users of a given language - although of course the nature of language is such that words can be used to create new categories of meaning.

The nature of language is such that there are categories which appear clearly - the division into nouns and verbs of most European languages - and sometimes the rules governing categories are much less 'surface' - the complex tense system of English, the division of Arabic verbs into two classes, expressing finite and non-finite action. Such categories are learned by their users. And there are also what Whorf called 'covert categories', always obeyed, understood in context: English divides the family dwelling into house and home; Tunisian Arabic can refer to a pleasant home as *khefif* (primary meaning: 'light' said of weight), but never *ghazin* ('heavy') - but a person's character can be *khefayfi* or *ghazin*. The inexperienced learner will make many errors

⁸⁰ *ibid* (note 68) p.34-35

⁸¹ *ibid* (note 68) p.62

⁸² Sapir, E. (1921) *Language: an introduction to the study of speech* New York: Harcourt, Brace and World in B.L. Whorf (1956) see J.B. Carroll (ed) *Language, thought and reality: the selected writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf* New York: Wiley

in the process of acquiring a language. To quote a Nabokovian professor of Russian, 'The cat cannot be hid in a bag'⁸³.

Hodge and Kress provide a valuable analysis of two samples of writing about working class women's experience. One is written by an academic, analysing the way a group of working class interact in discussion ('They handle internal disagreement in a tolerant and constructive way'); the second sample is a first person account by a woman named Freda, of her experience at work. The aim of the writer of the first piece is to refute the notion that certain groups of speakers have 'deficient resources of language and thought'.⁸⁴

The two samples were selected for analysis because they illustrate contrasting categorization patterns - the capable manipulation by Sue Shrapnel, (the academic writer) of abstract nouns with their accompanying adjectives, and Freda's (spoken) discourse, based heavily on personal pronouns and management terms to categorize the jobs world. At first reading, the oral extract seems simpler: only people take the role of agent.

Similarly things that can be possessed in Sue Shrapnel's text include talk, eloquence, confidence, whereas in Freda's text they are nouns such as job or skill.⁸⁵

However, Hodge and Kress point out, the greater linguistic richness of the 'academic' text is in fact created through transformation / deletion processes. In fact:

The price of the surface richness of the one language is mystification of real processes. Freda's language retains a firmer grip on the processes in her world, as the necessary basis for practical activity.⁸⁶

The ability to make effective use of different classificatory systems has important implications. For Shrapnel, whatever the mystificatory side to her production, the use of 'transformational resources' allows her 'to produce a language commodity which is

⁸³ Nabokov, Vladimir (1960) *Pnin* London: Penguin Books

⁸⁴ *ibid* (note 68) p.67

⁸⁵ *ibid* (note 68) p.69

⁸⁶ *ibid* (note 68) p.76

highly valued'⁸⁷, to create a text actively aiming to the shape the judgement of others. And linguistic goods like those sampled here are subject to categorization too, their form and articulation helping to orientate audience judgement. (As Hodge and Kress point out, the transcriber of the Freda extract could have chosen to emphasize the oral nature of the text 'by attempting to approximate the sound of the utterance'⁸⁸, but by so doing, would have suscitated 'a host of negative judgements about the speaker'.

Hodge and Kress continue their examination of classification with a look at anti-languages (Halliday's term⁸⁹ for the languages of sub-groups, 'societies which are consciously oppositional to the dominant society but contained within it'⁹⁰) But in-group jargon can be found across the social world, and Hodge and Kress mention the example of the administrative language discussed by Marcuse in *One-dimensional man*⁹¹. 'This is the language which gives cohesion to total administrators, the functionaries of large bureaucracies, and mediates their reality'.⁹² Chomsky⁹³ too has worked on such language, and a sample of military in-jargon, changing the terrible process of napalming people into an almost homely recipe, is discussed by Hodge and Kress at length⁹⁴.

As regards the present study, with its interest in the linguistic products of journalists and technocrats, the notions of classification and control through categories are important. Access to specialised vocabularies and their manipulation is essential to the shaping of State action - with very real material consequences for groups across society. The importance of categorization has been recognised in recent work on policy, and will be looked at below, notably in terms of the vocabularies, metaphors available to express rational State policy.

On the devices of modality

⁸⁷ *ibid* (note 68) p.70

⁸⁸ *ibid* (note 68) p.67

⁸⁹ Halliday, M.A.K. (1976) 'Antilanguages' in *American Anthropologist* 78 (3), pp.570-584

⁹⁰ *ibid* (note 68) p.71

⁹¹ Marcuse, H. (1964) *One-dimensional Man* London: Routledge, Kegan Paul

⁹² *ibid* (note 68) p.71

⁹³ Chomsky, N. (1993) *The Backroom Boys* London: Fontana / Collins

⁹⁴ *ibid* (note 68) pp.71-72

Policy, reports and media writing often require the author(s) to develop the finest shades of meaning; ambiguity may be all. Claims to truth may be based on knowledge and / or power, and in English, as in some other languages, this:

ambiguous attitude to the relation between knowledge and power is reflected in the system of modal auxiliaries.⁹⁵

Hodge and Kress provide a detailed discussion of the workings of some English modals, of how they establish 'the degree of authority of an utterance'⁹⁶. The question is clearly of importance to all language users - and to discourse analysts:

We can hypothesize and suggest that, since language functions to deceive as well as to inform, every component of the grammar will contain one set of forms which allow the speaker to avoid making distinctions which are primary and another set where these distinctions have to be made sharply and with precision.⁹⁷

Hodge and Kress opt to call the vague forms 'the simple forms' and precise forms, 'the articulated forms' or 'models'. For the analyst to be able to read off the intentionality of a writer or speaker, an awareness of modal usage is clearly essential. ('Modal verbs derive their force from the judgements of utterers, and are made as assertions about specific actors'⁹⁸).

But in English (and in other languages), modality may be rendered in other ways than verbs. Modal auxiliaries (i.e. possibly, probably, certainly) can be used to encode modality, as can 'transactive verbs referring to speech processes or mental processes', indicating 'the authority of an utterance or the relation of the speaker to the utterance'.⁹⁹ In clauses in English introduced by, say, 'I think that ...' or 'I feel that', the function of the verb is to show that the subsequent clause represents the opinion of agent concerned. Different forms like this can be used to protect a writer or speaker from criticism - and so may indicate a degree of unsureness about the power position

⁹⁵ *ibid* (note 68) p.122

⁹⁶ *ibid* (note 68) p.122

⁹⁷ *ibid* (note 68) p.125

⁹⁸ *ibid* (note 68) p.136

⁹⁹ *ibid* (note 68) p.126

or knowledge on display. Attention to modal forms, then, is of importance to analysing the semantic load of a text.

The language of war: a sample analysis

In their introduction to the 1993 edition of *Language as ideology*, Hodge and Kress remark on the criticisms made of the first edition. In part they seemed to some critics to have been highly opportunistic in their choice and use of a variety of English language texts. But as the authors remark in the introduction to the second edition:

We did not do justice to the complexity of particular contexts in our concern for a systematic exposition of linguistic forms, and this is not at all the impression that we want to give. On the contrary, linguistic forms do not have a single set of invariant functions and meanings, but are constantly remade by individuals with particular social histories and particular places in social structures. Hence linguistic forms as signs constantly change as they circulate in different contexts for different groups with different histories.¹⁰⁰

Here then is the nub of the new final chapter: language as sign system, part of the wider semiotic world. Using a wider range of texts produced and circulating at the time of the Gulf War, (extract from a George Bush speech broadcast on CNN, a war vocabulary list from the Guardian, and article, 'The fleeing army that died of shame' for the Sydney Morning Herald, readings of this article by students, a radio item), Hodge and Kress explore some of the accounts of the reality of this war that helped win 'the battle for minds ... without which the war on the ground could not be won, or would not have been worth the winning.'¹⁰¹

The examination of the war vocabulary 'is important in how it heightens two main syntactic patterns here tightly related to what the authors call a P (power) ideology and an S (solidarity) ideology.'¹⁰² The former is expressed through a set of relationals (x is y), based around the contrast between 'us' and 'them' ('us': desert rats, resolute, brave; 'them': mad dogs, ruthless, fanatical). The actionals, on the other hand, contrast euphemism with concrete verbal action ('take out' versus 'destroy', 'neutralise'

¹⁰⁰ *ibid* (note 68) p.xii

¹⁰¹ *ibid* (note 68) p.161

¹⁰² *ibid* (note 68) p.162-164

versus 'kill'). Here the reality of what the Allied armies were doing disappears behind the lexical mask. Hodge and Kress call this an S-ideology, which works to blur 'the image of overt hostility constructed by the P-ideology found in the relationals'.¹⁰³ Important insight is to be drawn from this analysis of intense classifying activity with respect to an ideological effect. The authors presume that:

... this process works ... through a combination of repetition and unobtrusiveness, and that this mode of working is crucial to the ideological effects that occur through language and through analogous means.¹⁰⁴

Still on the theme of the Gulf War, Hodge and Kress provide a telling analysis of the deployment of the syntactic elements in a feature article on the destroyed retreating Iraqi column on the Mutla' ridge north of Kuwait. The Iraqis emerge as common criminals (when the subject of transactives, it is as robbers and not as soldiers), or (in the S-forms), as the 'casualties of uncaused or self-caused violence'.¹⁰⁵ The importance of this analysis lies in how the use of language situates readers in relation to the account of the destruction of a fleeing army.

The next section on the Gulf War is based upon 'a reading of readings' of the preceding article, the resultant analysis raising a number of key points about critical discourse analysis. Through the multiple accounts produced by a group of students as they summarised the article, it became clear that although

the triumph of the war rhetoric wasn't and isn't inevitable, ... resistance will only take place along the lines of cleavage of the structures of reception.¹⁰⁶

From this the authors draw a conclusion important for their methodology: 'the minimal unit for analysis is not a single form or text in isolation, but a reading of a sequence in context, containing prior or later forms or texts'.¹⁰⁷ It is not possible for CDA to come up with the meaning of the text - rather it is possible to analyse the process instead of the product, as social meaning is created.

¹⁰³ *ibid* (note 68) p.164

¹⁰⁴ *ibid* (note 68) p.165

¹⁰⁵ *ibid* (note 68) p.174

¹⁰⁶ *ibid* (note 68) p.180

¹⁰⁷ *ibid* (note 68) p.181

Which leads us to two fundamental premises of the argument in *Language as ideology*. Firstly:

language is a social practice which is one amongst many social practices of representation and signification.¹⁰⁸

This links back to the position of Pierre Bourdieu and others on language discussed here in chapter 1. Secondly, Hodge and Kress see a need to redefine the nature of the linguistic sign 'as simultaneously a semiotic phenomenon and social fact'.¹⁰⁹ This leads them to propose that:

*linguistic signs are always motivated conjuncts of form and meaning.*¹¹⁰ (their italics)

This is of clear importance for the study of syntax, approaches to which are a key part of *Language as ideology* - and indeed in much, although not all, recent CDA work.

Syntax is seen by Hodge and Kress as a set of signs in the wider semiotic repertoire, which includes iconic and sound sets. Syntax is not seen as being any more or less homogeneous than other semiotic sets, nor does it precede or come after any of them. And like the wider language:

The signs of syntax are always ideologically inflected social meanings, with a common core which is common to a specified group, and a spectrum of differences, again mobilised by different groups for different purposes. These meanings are ideological in two senses: as representations of social existence, and as traces of mobilizations of discursive positionings and activities.¹¹¹

Hodge and Kress postulate that a semiotic lexicon, including other forms of sign, might be more useful than a conventional grammar for critical discourse analysts. By seeing syntax as part of 'the repertoire of meanings of a language', it thus becomes possible for a theory of grammar to take into account, in historical terms, 'the social

¹⁰⁸ *ibid* (note 68) p.202

¹⁰⁹ *ibid* (note 68) p.204

¹¹⁰ *ibid* (note 68) p.205

¹¹¹ *ibid* (note 68) p.208

origins and functions of the forms and processes of language'.¹¹² The project is vast, but then this is from the concluding chapter of *Language as ideology*.

But as Hodge and Kress acknowledge, their particular approach within CDA, seeking to establish 'a form of close linguistic description that is at the same time a precise account of the transactions that constitute social meanings'¹¹³ is still very much in its early stages. The net needs to be spread wider than the study of 'syntax as the carrier of ideological meanings'¹¹⁴ (and indeed in a recent book¹¹⁵, Kress and van Leeuwen explore the iconic aspects of discourse). For the moment, a good deal of critical discourse analysis adopts other strategies, more broad-brush in feel, to text. The next section, therefore, reviews some pieces of recent CDA work with special attention to the techniques used. And as one of the main focus areas in this study is media language in North Africa, this is followed in sub-chapter 3.5 by an in-depth account of two pieces of work on the Maghreb press, one, by Khadija Zizi, focusing on contrasting structures of language, the other, thematic, (Michel Camau) examining the legitimacy discourse of the Tunisian political élite.

Sub-section 3.6 looks at some wider, policy related discourse analysis, more in the broad Foucauldian tradition with discourse understood as interpretative framework, and then in 3.7 there is a review of some of the main 'technical' features of CDA as they appear in some of the work surveyed in this chapter.

¹¹² *ibid* (note 68) p.208

¹¹³ *ibid* (note 68) pp.200-209

¹¹⁴ *ibid* (note 68) p.208

¹¹⁵ Kress, G. and van Leeuwen, T. (1996) *Reading images: the grammar of visual design* London: Routledge

3.4 Narratives from the news: ideological constructs under analysis

News is not simply an (incomplete) description of facts, but a specific kind of (re)construction of reality according to the norms and values of some society.¹¹⁶

Much recent critical discourse analysis has focused on political language - very often as it circulates for public consumption in the print and audiovisual media. Given the present study's concern with urban deprivation and policy as represented in the print media of Tunisia, it seemed appropriate to review some of the recent related work. Thus I have chosen a small selection of press-related work, all on themes related to out-groups and social exclusion, as being particularly relevant to my own account of slum clearance in a Mediterranean city. The research work reviewed touches on the illegal immigration and welfare debates in the USA (Mehan 1997¹¹⁷ and de Goede 1996¹¹⁸ respectively) and 'the ideological construction of Africa' (Brooke 1995¹¹⁹) in the British press. All three articles appeared in *Discourse and Society*, probably the most influential journal of the nascent 'discipline' of discourse analysis. All three writers work on significant samples of representative argumentative and informative text, with, in Brookes' case, the iconic dimension being taken into account. Analyses of issues of this kind (the different ways in which out-group / in-group dichotomies are maintained in text) have of course been popular among critical linguists, with particular attention being paid to racism - see for example Lee's analyses of newspaper articles on South Africa¹²⁰, and van Dijk's 1993 *Elite discourse and racism*¹²¹. Here I will pay particular attention to the methodological approach and its

¹¹⁶ van Dijk, T.A. (1983) 'Discourse analysis: its development and application to the structure of news' in *Journal of communication* 33 (2), pp.20-43 (p.28)

¹¹⁷ Mehan, Hugh (1997) 'The discourse of the illegal immigration debate: a case study in the politics of representation' in *Discourse and Society* 8 (2), pp.249-270

¹¹⁸ de Goede, Marieke (1996) 'Ideology in the US welfare debate: neoliberal representations of poverty' in *Discourse and Society* 7 (3), pp.317-357

¹¹⁹ Brooke, Heather Jean (1995) "'Suit, tie and a touch of juju" - on the ideological construction of Africa: a critical discourse analysis of news on Africa in the British press' in *Discourse and Society* 6 (4), pp.461-494

¹²⁰ Lee, D. (1992) *Competing discourses: perspective and ideology in language* London: Longman, pp.91ff

¹²¹ van Dijk, T.A. (1983) 'Discourse analysis: its development and application to the structure of news' in *Journal of communication* 33 (2), pp.20-43

effectiveness in providing material to power through an argument on ideology and representation.

Following Fairclough¹²², all three writers are seeking to explore how a particular exclusionary ideological discourse is 'textually enacted'. The bottom line is that detailed textual analysis will enable the writer to demonstrate the workings of conservative ideologies on race, welfare and poverty. This premise obviously has to be set within a theory of language in society, and de Goede in particular provides an explicit theoretical framework based on neo-Gramscian thinking. For this author, the Gramscian concept of hegemony, with its notion of subordinate group consent helps to explain:

... how media institutions could be articulated to the production and reproduction of the dominant ideologies, while at the same time being 'free' of direct compulsion, and 'independent' of any direct attempt by the powerful to nobble them. (Hall 1992¹²³ quoted in de Goede 1996¹²⁴)

All three writers take what Mehan refers to as a constitutive view of language¹²⁵, taking words as 'an active political force' shaping the formation of categories which allow us to think society. As Mehan notes, this draws on a Foucauldian view of language formed of 'practices which systematically form the objects of which they speak'¹²⁶.

Our three writers, as good critical linguists, are thus involved in analysing the lexical and grammatical features of their chosen areas of discourse, examining, in Mehan's words:

¹²² Fairclough, N. (1992) 'Discourse and text: linguistic and intertextual analysis within discourse analysis' in *Discourse and Society* 3 (2), pp.193-217

¹²³ Hall, S. (1982) 'The rediscovery of "ideology": the return of the repressed in media studies' in S.H. Danziger and D.H. Weinberg (eds) *Fighting poverty: what works and what doesn't* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

¹²⁴ *ibid* (note 118) p.321

¹²⁵ *ibid* (note 117) p.251

¹²⁶ Foucault, Michel (1972) *The archaeology of knowledge and the discourse on language* New York: Pantheon, p.72 quoted in *ibid* (note 2) p.251

those linguistic means used to achieve goals in discourse, including the selection of words, topics, modes of representing people, places or events, rhetorical figures such as metaphor and hyperbole and shifts between codes¹²⁷.

This is a pretty broad programme of course, and the basic material differs in the three cases: while de Goede and Brookes have opted for press corpora (respectively 11 articles from Newsweek and 133 articles from the British press), in defined time periods, Mehan opts for a wider choice of data, drawing on the text of a piece of legislation (the infamous Proposition 187), speeches, articles, political documents and pamphlets, letters and newspaper editorials.

The methodology applied also differs between Mehan's work and that of Brookes and de Goede. The former has gone for a much more intuitive approach to his sample ('I then read and reread the texts until I could discern the discourse strategies the participants deployed in order to convince others'¹²⁸). The discourse surrounding Proposition 187, a piece of Californian legislation which would have excluded 'undocumented' immigrant children from public education and health care, is broken down and re-presented in terms of broad themes: the framing of the debate in us and them / in-group versus out-group competition, the use of vivid anecdotes and the sidelining of expert opinion, and the appeal to the self-interest of already established citizens. In Mehan's case study, detailed examination of syntactic forms is not a major feature, although it is there in the background. Mehan is particularly interested in the importance of lexis and naming in the discursive creation of out-group¹²⁹, and notes the radically different terminologies available for the immigrant groups ('illegal aliens' with all the heavy semantic charge of the word alien, as opposed to 'non-resident workers' and 'undocumented workers'). Also important this time in syntactic terms, is the use of indexical expressions or deictics (pointer words) in the creation of an us and them background to the debate, with we being used to build a sense of inclusion into the texts, and the us versus them theme setting up relationships of opposition and exclusion.

Essentially, though, Mehan is more interested in two main strategies of the illegal immigration debate: 'direct appeals to personal self interest'¹³⁰ and the power of

¹²⁷ *ibid* (note 117) p.251

¹²⁸ *ibid* (note 117) p.252

¹²⁹ *ibid* (note 117) p.257ff

¹³⁰ *ibid* (note 117) p.261

anecdote over expert opinion. He notes the power of discursive strategies, quoting relevant examples and explaining the context of the lines of argument (i.e. the American individualist ideology). For Mehan it is clear that although the opponents of Proposition 187 argued frequently in rational ways, employing figures and other 'objective' features, anecdotes were just as powerful, if not more so when used 'to trump arguments that appear to be more reasonable - including those that deploy statistical evidence.'¹³¹

All of which depends heavily on the material and the interpretative powers of the analyst over it. While not denying that 'the immigrant was made the enemy in this debate in large part by the mediational work of powerful voices, including the State'¹³², I would suggest that the divisiveness of the prevailing discourses might have been better emphasized with attention to the actual availability and form of texts. (But here one reaches the question of text reception, which is ultimately crucial to Mehan's argument).

Because of the more restricted nature of their chosen samples, plus the one-sided nature of the press material under analysis (welfare recipients and contemporary Africa), de Goede and Brookes are able to adopt a more linguistic focus towards their material, with 'linguistic' here understood as attention to lexis and syntax. Brookes is particularly systematic in a quantitative way, providing detailed breakdowns of such features as 'the macropropositional content of headlines'¹³³ and of the construction of agency. The two writers differ slightly, however, in their aims. Through her news sample, de Goede is concerned to trace a shift in neo-liberal U.S. discourse on welfare and the deprived; Brookes on the other hand, is dealing with a much more fixed, even rigid, discourse on race and the Other.

Brookes' basic premise is that the deep-rooted stability of the British media viewpoint of Africa is best observed in the language of the press. She takes the reader from the basic story frames (all tying in with a view of Africans as violent, corrupt and incapable) to the linguistic nitty-gritty of the text: this includes lexis (a multiplicity of words around violence, repression and helplessness), metaphor (floods, disease and darkness), and epithet, i.e. the prevalence of evaluative categorizations such as brutal

¹³¹ *ibid* (note 117) p.263

¹³² *ibid* (note 117) p.267

¹³³ *ibid* (note 119) p.467

tribal feud and corrupt Third World régimes. (This last feature has been examined by other analysts under the heading of collocations).

Of particular importance are the distribution of agent roles and themes (foregrounding of an element by placing it first in a clause). With respect to agency and process, Brookes notes how the West's role in this sample text is primarily one of doers, 'actors and sayers in material and verbal processes' of various kinds. In contrast, African agents are frequently 'done to' - 'as victims, as receivers of verbal processes and as beneficiaries of giving processes'.¹³⁴

To turn to the paper on welfare policy in the U.S., de Goede adopts a similar approach, preceding her analysis with a detailed check list / review of the tools of discourse analysis¹³⁵ as accepted in the early 1990s and derived from lead writers in the field, including Fowler¹³⁶ and Fairclough¹³⁷. She then goes on to focus on the linguistic underpinnings of the conservative angle on the U.S. welfare debate, focusing, like Brookes, on lexis - here through a close examination of the term 'welfare dependency' and the use of inclusive deictics 'we' and 'everyone'. The approach here is broadly similar to Brookes, taking the reader through the actors and how they are positioned in agent / passive roles through language choices. Also among the features remarked and discussed by de Goede are overlexicalisation, metaphorical language, and hyperbole¹³⁸ (single parenthood, for example, qualified in terms more suitable to the impact of a volcanic eruption on a small Caribbean island). She also points to the manipulation of figures and what is basically unfounded stereotyping of the out-group concerned. This is of crucial importance to policy, de Goede feels:

... this construction of 'otherness' and moral deviance allows the proposal of cruel and inhumane policies, while mainstream America argues it is otherwise 'helpless' to improve the circumstances of the poor.

¹³⁴ *ibid* (note 119) p.476

¹³⁵ *ibid* (note 118) pp.330-332

¹³⁶ Fowler, R. (1991) *Language in the News: discourse and ideology in the press* London: Routledge

¹³⁷ Fairclough, N. (1995) *Media Discourse* London: Edward Arnold

¹³⁸ *ibid* (note 118) pp.338-339

All three authors reviewed here are aiming to show, in the words of Stubbs¹³⁹,

how discourse [is] organised to appear factual, literal, objective, authoritative and independent of author.

All three writers are involved in analysing patterns of language, with Brookes in particular, working on a large sample, paying detailed attention to syntax in text. Grammatical forms are analysed in terms of the meanings they produce (for the attentive, interpreting scholar), the underlying theme of these analyses being that of how knowledges are mediated in language.

But just as significant for de Goede and Mehan is the issue of context, the privileged background knowledge brought by the observer to their corpora. (Brookes does not set news on Africa in the wider context of, say, British foreign policy or foreign news reporting). De Goede is interested in how the current shift in the U.S. welfare debate ties in with broader, conservative theories on welfare and poverty - notably the concept of the 'culture of poverty'. Mehan, too, is interested in the wider view - he employs the term 'cultural and historical scripts'¹⁴⁰ to describe the way in which institutions address individuals, and his argument on 'immigrants as out-group' is set in the framework of élite and State institutions' need for an enemy. (The Cold War is over, the enemy is now within)¹⁴¹. The result, when an account brings together context, meaning in context and linguistic features, is an analysis with a great deal of depth and persuasive force. (De Goede's paper in particular is a good illustration, I feel). In methodological terms, the implications are clear: assumptions about the world are often encapsulated in taken-for-granted language, which can be explored by using the CDA toolkit; however, although a given corpus can be 'worked' and inferences made about the ideological effect of its structures, the corpus must be set within the context of its production and that of the wider related discourse - thus opening the possibility of challenging both the ideological workings of discourse and the accepted definitions of a given issue... not an easy task, as de Goede notes, quoting Stuart Hall:

Opposing arguments are easy to mount. Changing the terms of an argument is exceedingly difficult, since the dominant definition of the problem acquires,

¹³⁹ Stubbs, M. (1996) *Text and Corpus Analysis* Oxford: Blackwell, p.97

¹⁴⁰ *ibid* (note 117) p.253

¹⁴¹ *ibid* (note 117) pp.253-54

by repetition, and by weight and credibility of those who propose and subscribe to it, the warrant of 'common sense'¹⁴².

After this look at the mechanics of discourse analysis techniques used to tackle issues as viewed from an élite perspective - 'enemy fabrication', in Mehan's terms¹⁴³ - I now move this overview of CDA work to the Maghreb, looking at two examples of discourse related work, one with a strong methodological focus, the other essentially issue driven.

3.5 Discourse analysis and the Maghreb press: two approaches

Discourse analysis type work, with a concern for the deep structures of language as it functions in society has yet to be taken up to any significant extent by academics working in / on the Maghreb, perhaps because it is for the moment very much an English language based research practice with centres of interest in Australia, the UK and the Netherlands. University links in the Maghreb tend to be first and foremost with the Francophone world and then to specific countries for given areas of research (i.e. links with Italy in the field of architecture and urban planning, for example). Here I review two pieces of discourse related work on North Africa for their relevance to one of the chief areas of the present study (the press), and for their methodological content. Neither pieces are recent - Michel Camau¹⁴⁴ on the political legitimacy discourse of the Tunisian élite dates from 1972, Khadija Zizi¹⁴⁵ on newspaper prose in Arabic, French and English, from 1987 - and it may well be that there is other research currently being undertaken in the critical linguistic tradition at newer institutions such as Al Akhawayn University, Ifrane. What is certain is that North Africa, with its rich span of languages and language-use patterns, is potentially a very rewarding area for the critically minded linguistics-based researcher.

¹⁴² Hall, S. (1982) (note 8) p.81 in de Goede, M. (1996) (note 3), p.318

¹⁴³ *ibid* (note 117) p.250

¹⁴⁴ Camau, Michel (1972) 'Le discours politique de légitimité des élites tunisiennes' in M. Camau (ed) *Elites, pouvoir et légitimité au Maghreb* Paris: Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord, pp.29-72

¹⁴⁵ Zizi, Khadija (1987) *Contrastive discourse analysis of argumentative and informative newspaper prose in Arabic, French and English: suggestions for teaching / learning English as a foreign language for journalistic purposes (EJP) in Morocco* unpublished PhD dissertation University of Illinois

Khadija Zizi's contrastive approach to informative and argumentative newspaper prose across three languages is an ambitious project, to say the least. Zizi takes a certain number of linguistic, textual variables (coherence¹⁴⁶, repetition¹⁴⁷, discursive organisation¹⁴⁸ and speech acts¹⁴⁹) and studies how they vary across a tri-lingual sample of news items taken from major Moroccan, French and American dailies. She reaches the conclusion that although implicit knowledge is similar across all three languages, 'information was culture specific'¹⁵⁰:

Similar elements were found in the content structure of all texts (i.e; What, Who, When, Where, Why, How), but in different sequences across genres and languages. Cross-genre similarities were detected in the nature of the elements of the global structure of the articles, but their sequence patterned differently across languages.¹⁵¹

Zizi's speech act analysis reveals that English language writers tended to use representatives to convince and inform, while French and Arabic went for more declaratives and expressives, especially to inform, i.e. speech acts expressing the psychological state of the writer about the proposition and where the writer makes a successful correspondence between proposition and reality. With regard to argumentative text, Zizi's analysis highlights a difference between Arabic and the two Indo-European languages concerned. In her sample:

¹⁴⁶ coherence: here Zizi (note 145, pp.17-19) is interested in how meanings of sentences are related to each other so that the whole text comes to have meaning. This involves the building of relations between explicit and implicit information.

¹⁴⁷ repetition: Zizi (note 145, pp.32-34) is concerned in particular with parallel structures (repetition of form), a rhetorical device much used in written Arabic.

¹⁴⁸ discursive organisation: looking at the way a number of recent commentators, notably van Dijk, have theorised the building blocks of news text (see note 2, pp.19-24)

¹⁴⁹ speech acts: linguistic theory based upon the concept that when we use language we are performing a social act. First proponents included J.L. Austin (1962, *How to do things with words*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press) and J.R. Searle (1976, 'A classification of illocutionary acts' in *Language in Society* 5 (1), pp.1-23). Zizi draws principally on the latter's taxonomy of representatives (commits speakers to the truth of their speech), directives, commissives (commits the speaker to future action), expressives (expressing psychological state about subject matter) and declaratives. See Zizi (note 2, pp.36-37).

¹⁵⁰ Zizi (note 145) p.iii

¹⁵¹ *ibid* (note 145) p.iii-iv

Persuasion in English and French is achieved by means of facts, declarations, and the expression of opinions and emotions; while Arabic uses a greater amount of opinions and / or emotions.¹⁵²

The lack of directives in all three language samples means that 'it is up to the reader ... to draw inferences about what action to take'.¹⁵³

From her in-depth analysis of newspaper prose, Zizi reaches some surprising conclusions - and others rather more prosaic. In terms of coherence, informative article headlines were longest, while argumentative headlines were more ambiguous. Unstated information in the texts was specific to individual societies. In terms of discursive organisation, English and French presented the why of an event first, and the how last; Arabic put what second (English and French put when second). French and most Arabic informative articles had conclusions, as well as event and consequence.

In terms of repetition, Zizi presents detailed findings about linkage, parallel constructions and restatement. English informative text emerged as having the highest amount of repetition, and lexical linkage was most common in this type of text in all three languages.

Zizi's most surprising findings concern her analysis of speech acts. I have already pointed out that her sample shows that Arabic and French writers performed more expressives in the headlines. Arabic writing tends to use passive forms to represent the world, while French and English use quotes. However, the largest number of directives being in French argumentative prose leads Zizi to write:

The fact that French writers were more direct (i.e. forceful) than English supports Duda's (1982)¹⁵⁴ assumption that French-speaking people are more forceful than English-speaking ones.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² *ibid* (note 145) p.172

¹⁵³ *ibid* (note 145) p.172

¹⁵⁴ Duda, R. (1982) *Actes illocutoires et discours de la presse écrite* ERIC document, reproduction service no.ED 231 209

¹⁵⁵ *ibid* (note 145) p.247

A similar sweeping generalization is made on the basis of their being (in the sample) differences between the languages in the way persuasion is accomplished: Zizi sees her findings on English prose as supporting those of Bacus¹⁵⁶ (persuasion achieved by appeal to authority, basic values, facts and figures), while with respect to French prose, she sees her conclusions as supporting those of Ager¹⁵⁷, namely that writers of French-language editorials 'use emotion, propaganda, and comments in order to convince readers'¹⁵⁸. However, perhaps the most polemical generalization is based on the fact that the Arabic texts include the largest number of expressive speech acts. Says Zizi:

Here [on persuasion] my findings support those of several others. For Arabic ... writers included a great deal of emotion in their writing, they exaggerated and they appealed to the emotion and sympathy of the reader. Repetition (and restatement in particular) was also a factor which contributed to the persuasive quality of argumentative texts. This

confirms Al-Jubouri (1984)¹⁵⁹ and Atiyah (1955:96)¹⁶⁰ who stated that 'it is a characteristic of the Arab mind to be swayed more by words than ideas, and more by ideas than by facts'¹⁶¹.

Readers, of say, *The Sunday People*, moved by the appeals to emotion and the exaggeration some would hold as characteristic of the British tabloid press, are presumably characterized by an Arab mind-set too.

I include this rather lengthy précis of Zizi's findings (I could perhaps have given more detail of the numerous statistical tables which accompany here analyses) because I

¹⁵⁶ Bacus, K.P. (1974) *The rhetoric of the press: newspaper treatment of Richard Nixon's major statements on Vietnam* unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Kansas

¹⁵⁷ Ager, D.E. (1970) *Styles and registers in contemporary French: passages for analysis* London: University of London Press

¹⁵⁸ *ibid* (note 145) p.249

¹⁵⁹ Al-Jubouri, A.J.R. (1984) 'The role of repetition in Arabic argumentative discourse' in J. Swales and H. Mustapha (eds) *English for specific purposes in the Arab world* Birmingham: Language Studies Unit, pp.99-177

¹⁶⁰ Atiyah, E. (1955) *The Arabs* Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin

¹⁶¹ *ibid* (note 145) p.249

think it is a good, if unfortunate illustration of the potential pitfalls of too much reliance on a discourse analysis 'tool kit'. While not contesting the high level of detail in this contrastive approach, it remains that this amount of detail is perhaps only possible within a single book, with a small sample. In fact, the study analyses thirty sample texts, fifteen for each of the argumentative and informative prose types, five for each of the three languages. The source of the samples is similarly limited: *Le Monde* for the French, U.S. based *New York Times* for the English, and *Al-'Alam* (The Standard) for the Arabic. Whether one can really generalise to any meaningful extent about the nature of journalistic prose in Arabic on the basis of ten short articles from a Moroccan newspaper is a moot point. Zizi, to be fair, right at the end of her conclusion, does acknowledge that:

the findings of the Arabic sample cannot be extended to Arabic in general, due to the heavy influence of French journalism in Morocco¹⁶².

The expression 'heavy influence' is problematic, I would argue, opening up a whole research programme on the social production of journalistic prose (an issue touched upon by Camau, see below).

Using the complex ingredients of quantitative discourse analysis to reveal the global structure of a small sample of press texts and reach the conclusion that Moroccan journalist students should learn:

... how to convince by means of facts, figures and appeal to authority ... and how to differentiate between English and Arabic-speaking people in terms of how they inform and convince others¹⁶³

might seem like the equivalent of bringing CNN to report on a cat up a tree. The underlying assumption of the second 'should' here is important however. It takes us into the realm of societal context (is there such a thing as a homogeneous speech community?). This, on the whole, is ignored by Zizi. What can and cannot be said, taboo areas and zones of coarse over-exposure are necessarily socially defined. Within the parameters of the very small sample of Arabic texts, it may be that the greater recourse to expressives is due to lack of clear information. Public institutions in a U.S. or European context may have a duty to release details of an accident at a

¹⁶² *ibid* (note 145) p.256

¹⁶³ *ibid* (note 145) p.255

factory or at a hospital; the duty manager at a Mohamedia oil refinery may have no real legal or other pressure on them to release details of a fire (hence the flat tone of *Al-'Alam*, Arabic sample 1). In the example of the damage caused by floods at Oued Zem, the information available may be limited because of the regional authorities' fear of appearing incompetent - or just the simple difficulty of collating any sort of statistics at all for an over-stretched provincial branch of the State bureaucracy.

I give these examples because I feel that the speech acts and lexis, content and structure of a given newspiece are closely linked to its context of production and reception. To compare samples of the output of a respected, but small-circulation Moroccan daily with that of newspapers with international status and huge resources would be more meaningful if local context was taken into account, in the wider sense of the term. (There is mention that socio-cultural knowledge is necessary to elucidate certain items in the texts). Thus in contrast to the heavy duty 'technical' approach taken by Zizi, I turn to Michel Camau's press-based analysis of the 'legitimacy discourse' of the Tunisian political élite in the 1960s. Here, as will be seen, great pains are taken to provide adequate and appropriate information on context - this lexis-focused study is at the opposite end of the CDA spectrum to Zizi's with its speech act bias.

Camau is interested in ideology, specifically in State, development-based ideologies, and his case study is Tunisia in 1969; the sample purveying the ideology is the official ruling party French-language newspaper, *L'Action*, for that year. Through an examination of the themes in this government organ, he attempts to get at the grounding myths of the Tunisian State. As I read his account of the dominant themes (and their mode of expression) I was struck by the continuity of this discourse into the 1990s. Plus ça change ... the rhetoric of the *just milieu* has shifted only slightly in the intervening period, just under three decades, and has survived a change in President.

Camau provides a thorough discussion of ideology theory as it stood in the late 1960s, referring mainly to Althusser and Poulantzas, Balandier and Duprat; the political legitimacy discourse is seen as part of the dominant ideology, a particular *région*, namely political ideology. In short,

the domain of political ideology may be considered as covering a whole set of "representations" which concern the basis, functioning and aims of the State

(in the general sense of "political power" and not only in the particular sense of Nation-State), in a given social context¹⁶⁴.

Following Balandier¹⁶⁵, Camau notes that there will be differing types of political legitimacy discourses within a given social formation. Different types of documentation will therefore contain differing types of discourse.

Camau provides a full account of the print media context in Tunisia. His target paper, *L'Action*, is the only official French language organ, with an Arabic equivalent, *Al-Amal*. At the time of writing, *L'Action* was put together almost exclusively from dispatches issued by the government news agency, *Tunis Afrique Presse* - apart from one or two specialised rubrics, editorials and political commentaries. *L'Action* is considered by Camau to be an élite newspaper: features such as comic strips, horoscopes and articles on Parisian fashion were unlikely to have mass appeal in late 1960s Tunisia - and of course there is the question of language (although Camau does not make this explicit). The underlying assumption is that technocrat élites read more readily in French rather than in Arabic. In the words of Souriau-Hoebrechts:

L'Action represents a serious instrument of political training. It is a newspaper aimed at the cadres of the Destour Party, supplying them with historic, economic and social documents so that they may become informed and efficient militants.¹⁶⁶

Camau then sets the ideological world of *L'Action* in the context of the problématique facing the Tunisian élite: 'national unity' is the aim of political life - but how, then, to explain the contradictions of social life in this 'developing' state. Camau identifies 'dualism' (he could have discussed this as 'the dualist myth') as being the necessary explanation, a series of dichotomies underpinning the present-day situation: on the one hand, a negative pole - the mass - characterised by tradition, passion, ideology, decadence and backwardness - will be pulled forward by education and development by the élite (a second pole), working on the basis of modernity, reason and science, all features of a civilised, developed society.

¹⁶⁴ Camau, *ibid* (note 144) p.34, my translation

¹⁶⁵ Balandier, Jean-Pierre (1968) 'Essai sur le concept d'idéologie politique' in *Revue algérienne des sciences juridiques, économiques et politiques* 5 (3), September 1968

¹⁶⁶ Souriau-Hoebrechts, Christiane (1969) *La presse maghrébine* Paris: Editions du Cnrs, p.187 quoted in Camau (note 144) p.36

The legitimacy of the Tunisian élite, according to Camau, is constructed on this dualist basis, and he demonstrates this in the light of three recurring themes: underdevelopment, development, State-citizen relations. The analysis is made on the basis of a presentation of the lexis of political rhetoric as present in speeches and reports published in *L'Action*. With respect to underdevelopment, the description of pre-colonial Tunisia as decadent is a recurring feature¹⁶⁷, manifest in expressions such as 'the long centuries of decadence', 'the centuries of darkness' - from which Tunisia will emerge to join 'the procession of developed peoples' (the French expression is *le cortège des peuples évolués*). This theme, based on certain historical facts, the origins of which are left obscure, enables the role of the élite to be emphasized, the 'team of men of quality' who were given to Tunisia in the twentieth century. In the words of premier Bahi Ladgham:

It is Tunisia's great chance that the men who led the struggle for independence are the very same who are leading the struggle for economic and social development.¹⁶⁸

Camau proceeds in a similar way with the themes of development and the relationship between State and citizens, establishing the patterns of lexis and meaning by which the élite justifies the legitimacy of its policy options. And in 1969 this rhetoric, as Camau makes clear, had considerable importance as a major shift was underway - the creation of cooperatives, the Tunisian 'socialist' experiment - which had to be sold to the small farmers and artisans as well as to the nascent bourgeoisie which had profited from the departure of the 'European' communities. Considerable rhetorical dexterity was required of the Premier to deal with 'misunderstandings', to convince the constituency that 'Destourian socialism' was

the adaptation to the Tunisian context of an ideology which considered itself a science, in contrast to "utopia" founded on social antagonisms.¹⁶⁹

The importance of this piece of research, in contrast to Zizi's 'contrastive discourse analysis', lies really in the care taken to situate the discourse sample in the prevailing socio-economic context, along with the relevant historic background. In 'linguistic' terms, the analysis may seem a little hasty, but the focus on lexis in context does

¹⁶⁷ The decadence theme is one which has largely disappeared from 1990s Tunisian media writing / political rhetoric, replaced by an often expressed 'attachment to the values of Islam'.

¹⁶⁸ Bahi Ladgham quoted in an article in *L'Action* 6/2/69, in Camau (note 144) p.48

¹⁶⁹ *ibid* (note 144) p.57

enable the writer to draw out the contradictions of the discourse, (the specificity of the Tunisian State's pragmatic balance has to fit in with the accepted notion of science and rationality), to examine how the élite of a small, developing country was attempting to legitimate a policy of promoting a form of national capitalism while running into the reality of the inequalities of the international system. Political legitimacy discourse, in Camau's terms, is:

the texture of the set of messages issuing from the political élite destined for the different layers of the national population and foreign heads of State¹⁷⁰

This view of a public, political language - even though its view of the minutiae of phrasing is perhaps a little sketchy - I find highly useful as an approach. It seems to me that it facilitates an understanding of the broad regions of consensus underlying a national policy style. It is also an approach which links in with some more recent research. The notion of discourse as 'a set of messages', as communication, (in the case of Camau's research, justifying political options), is close to some British research on State policy (close also to what is referred to in French as *analyse de contenu*). In contrast to the more quantitative research approach exemplified by Zizi, work like Camau's is highly dependent on the interpretative powers of the analyst. In Zizi's work, the premise is different: linguistic structures speak for themselves, the independent analyst is backgrounded. Thus, in the next section, I continue to look at discourse from the communication angle, examining how some recent academic work in the UK has tried to bridge the gap between language and policy areas.

3.6 Discourse as interpretative framework: an adequate approach to policy analysis?

Working on a specific crisis phase in the recent history of Tunisia, Michel Camau was concerned to see how the dominant interpretation of policy - and of events arising from its implementation - was constructed, how the dominant meaning was established. This is a concern in recent policy research in the UK, what Hajer, one of the main writers working along these lines, has called 'discursive domination'¹⁷¹. Much of this work on policy discourses is of Foucauldian inspiration, while some writers draw on the Gramscian notion of hegemony. Close focus on language is an

¹⁷⁰ *ibid* (note 144) p.31

¹⁷¹ Hajer, M.A. (1989) *City politics: hegemonic projects and discourse* Aldershot: Avebury, p.42

oft stated aim - and the interest is reflected in conferences and seminars¹⁷². At international level, the CNRS was sponsoring (1997-98) a research programme entitled *Les mots de la ville* (Words of the city). The concern with language and discourse in policy research obviously raises methodological issues - how best to build the bridges with the disciplines traditionally most concerned with text and image in society. Here, as I move on from work with a very tight linguistic focus, I have chosen to look at recent work by a number of writers, chief among them Tett and Woolfe¹⁷³, Moore Milroy¹⁷⁴, Throgmorton¹⁷⁵ and Hajer¹⁷⁶. Reference will also be made to other research on the language of urban issues, both professional and lay. Much of this work bears a strong Foucauldian imprint, with a theoretical interest in discourse as it relates to governmentality. In terms of detailed textual study, Tett and Wolfe's work on Canadian city plans links in with the socio-linguistic research described so far in this chapter, and provided a useful source of inspiration for my own analysis of Tunisian policy documents on sub-standard housing.

Tett and Wolfe, in their 'Discourse analysis and city plans' are concerned with the rhetorical construction of planning documents. They set their research in the framework of the discursive approaches taken by Forester¹⁷⁷ and Boyer¹⁷⁸, the former drawing on a Habermasian notion of discourse to evaluate the communicative practices of planners, the latter working along Foucauldian lines to examine the evolving discourses of the American planning profession. But as Tett and Wolfe note in their introduction:

¹⁷² See for example the seminar organised at the University of Glasgow by the Centre for Housing Research and Urban Studies (CHRUS), entitled *Discourse and urban change: foregrounding language in housing and urban research*, 2-3 June 1997.

¹⁷³ Tett, Alison and Woolfe, Jeanne M. (1991) 'Discourse analysis and city plans' in *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, summer 1991, 10 (3), pp.195-200

¹⁷⁴ Moore Milroy, B. (1989) 'Constructing and deconstructing plausibility' in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 7, pp.313-326

¹⁷⁵ Throgmorton, J.A. (1992) 'Planning as persuasive storytelling about the future: negotiating an electric power rate settlement in Illinois' in *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 1992, 12, pp.17-31; Throgmorton, J.A. (1993) 'Planning as rhetorical activity: survey research as a trope in arguments about electric power planning in Chicago' in *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 1993, 59 (3), pp.334-346

¹⁷⁶ see note 171 and Hajer, M.A. (1995) *The politics of environmental discourse: ecological modernization and the policy process* Oxford: Clarendon Press

¹⁷⁷ Forester, J. (1985) 'Critical theory and planning practice' in *Critical Theory and Public Life*, ed. J. Forester, Cambridge: MIT Press

¹⁷⁸ Boyer, C. (1983) *Dreaming the Rational City* Cambridge: MIT Press

Both Forester and Boyer draw attention to the role of discourses in the planning profession without providing extended textual analyses of planning discourse itself.¹⁷⁹

It is this sort of textual analysis which Tett and Wolfe seek to undertake, identifying some of the enduring discursive traits of four Canadian planning documents, seen as:

a circumscribed, 'hard copy' instance of planners' discourse that planners intentionally write for public distribution.¹⁸⁰

The analysis presented in the paper examines how an authoritative voice is established in the documents, and how other 'less-authoritative' voices are given marginal positions. Four main areas of linguistic importance are identified:

- the extensive use of passive, non-transactive forms
- agentless change
- the construction of legitimacy through the use of legal language
- the use of references to a dialogue with the public

Thus Tett and Wolfe are concerned with the voice of the discourse (pp.196-198), and voices in the discourse (pp.198-199). With respect to the former, the actual authors of plans are removed from the text by the extensive use of agentless constructions which denote government or planners' action. Documents can be made the subject of verbs, and a vague, consensual 'we' can speak for government and / or community.

In a similar way, the processes of urban change are left vague, the result of some 'impersonal collective will or technology'. Ultimately, it is up to the reader to infer the agencies and individuals who are responsible for planning decisions. And as Tett and Wolfe note:

A fundamental contradiction by this means is created between the lack of agency credited to previous planning documents, and the supposed efficacy of the current document¹⁸¹.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid* (note 173) p.195

¹⁸⁰ *ibid* (note 173) p.196

¹⁸¹ *ibid* (note 173) p.198

There are two other key ways in which the actual agents producing plans are sidelined; these are the use of the 'voice of legality' and 'fake dialogue'¹⁸². The former voice emphasises the legal status of a plan,

... so as to give credence to the document itself rather than to an identifiable interest group speaking through it¹⁸³.

Fake dialogue, on the other hand, stresses a unitary 'public', an Other, separate from the authoritative authorial voice, whose interests are protected and promoted in a plan. However, this is a public which remains entirely passive in the planning process. In examples taken from two of the plans analysed, it is quite clear that any dialogue or participation is really limited to comment upon the final product of the planning process.

In the final substantive section of the paper, Tett and Wolfe look at how speaking subject positions are constructed through general vocabulary uses. They note a number of key lexical items which often figure in Anglo-American planning documents, both nouns ('good development', 'amenity', 'nuisance' and 'better use') and adjectives ('suitable' and 'appropriate' / 'inappropriate'). The point is that terms like these have meanings determined by their setting within the discursive formation concerned. Had Tett and Wolfe wished to push their socio-linguistic analysis further, they might have looked at the collocates of key, quasi-technical planning terms. It is quite clear that this sort of jargon, despite its claims to objectivity and rationality, contains a large number of qualifiers, the validity of which need never be questioned. In whose view something is 'appropriate' or not is left on one side, the subjective opinion naturalised into the discourse.

The importance of this 1991 paper on planning documents lies in its attempt to bring together very specific linguistic analysis of textual features against the background of recent discussion of the nature of communication in the public sphere. The writers clearly recognise that planning texts are the site of conflict. This project, however, opening the way for further critique of city plans, is at one and the same time modernist and post-modernist. It is modernist in that it seeks 'to create a future of choice', of accountable planning, and post-modern in its 'recognition of the multiple

¹⁸² *ibid* (note 173) p.198

¹⁸³ *ibid* (note 173) p.198

choices that shape our choice'¹⁸⁴. This duality, Tett and Wolfe argue, must be integrated into everyday planning practice, if wider constituencies are to be empowered, gaining an effective voice in the planning process.

I have given a fairly detailed account of this piece of research in urban planning for its pronounced linguistic bias. It seems to me representative of the new interpretation of discourse in planning, introduced principally by Forester. This is a trend which has developed since with research by the likes of Throgmorton and Hajer. Little of this research, however, has focused on the grammatical detail of text. (Within housing research, interest has developed in social constructionist approaches to policy discourse, examining the rhetoric of tenant group empowerment and entrepreneurial management'¹⁸⁵). Some writers, however, have gone into the linguistic functioning of planning documents from the wider rhetorical angle in great detail. Throgmorton's highly detailed work on planning for the expansion of electric power generation infrastructure in Chicago is a particularly noteworthy example, as is a 1989 paper by Beth Moore Milroy. For both writers, the primary concern is with the shaping of plausible storylines by planners; through the examination of how these narratives are constructed, the unsaid can be recovered, and 'what planning must suppress in order to remain planning'¹⁸⁶ can be revealed. The focus then is the exploration of the 'communicative practices in the very political activity of planning'.¹⁸⁷

Moore Milroy situates her 1989 discussion of the rhetorical operations in a piece of planning text within a deconstructionist theoretical framework. The document examined, a Canadian report on urban renewal, examines how residential conditions can be improved for the people of a Toronto inner-city neighbourhood. Moore Milroy's close reading of the text reveals the contrast between surface and underlying meanings of the report. To tap into the major funding available for inner-urban regeneration (if a neighbourhood remains residential) planners had to show that the area in question would remain devoted to housing use. This is done through professional logic:

¹⁸⁴ *ibid* (note 173) p.199

¹⁸⁵ Haworth, Anna and Manzi, Tony (1997) 'Managing the "underclass": the implication of changing moral frameworks for housing policy' unpublished paper given at the seminar *Discours and Urban Change*, Centre for Housing and Urban Research, University of Glasgow, June 1997

¹⁸⁶ Moore Milroy, Beth (1989) 'Constructing and deconstructing plausibility' in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 1989 (7), pp.313-326, p.325

¹⁸⁷ Moore Milroy, Beth (1991) 'Into postmodern weightlessness' in *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, summer 1991, 10 (3), pp.181-187, p.182

In theory, planners put logically analysed data together with an understanding of the public good; they are not in the business of rationalising bounties.¹⁸⁸

In fact, what the planners were doing was constructing a plausible future for the area on the basis of an implicit deference to a *quid pro quo*, federal funding for continued residential use, which in effect subverts the dispassionate professional logic on which this sort of report is normally (or rather literally) based. Through the use of connotative terms underpinning the area's subordinate status, the authors reinforce the position that high status economic activities are unlikely to move into the area: with the toponym Jarvis Street, they denote poverty and petty criminality - and hence prestigious business users would not choose to move in, even though conventional urban economics would suggest that high bidders might be expected to want the land. Thus Moore Milroy's analysis is useful to reveal the paradox of State-sponsored planning activity:

... it concerns a neighbourhood which planners construe theoretically, professionally and metaphorically as a residual land use and, in the manner of doing so, put their professional planning practice in question.¹⁸⁹

Throgmorton's immensely detailed research works on very similar lines, and his methodological approach to planning narratives has been developed in numerous papers and a recent book. (The latter, however, with its vast amount of detail and quotation, does illustrate the difficulties of making very locally specific material accessible and interesting to a wider, academic audience). In my view, the importance of this work on a major urban issue (provision of a service by a utility company), lies in its recognition of the importance of persuasive imagery within planning texts; the use of metonymy and synecdoche, metaphor and irony:

For example ... when we use surveyed samples to represent entire populations, we are using synecdoche (substituting a part for a whole). When we use computer models to simulate electric power usage patterns, we are using metaphor (an implied comparison between two things of an unlike nature) ... When we weave these tropes together into a plan or analysis, we are engaging in persuasive discourse.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ *ibid* (note 186) p.324

¹⁸⁹ *ibid* (note 186) p.322

¹⁹⁰ Throgmorton 1992 (note 175) p.19

Perhaps more interesting in Throgmorton's portrayal of the groups struggling to influence the development of the electric power system in northern Illinois is his work on actual discussions in meetings. Here the methodology moves away from the written text to become a form of ethnographic reporting. Sometimes the sheer amount of detail can get the better of the reader. However, much of the description of how the consumer groups constructed a more persuasive story than the Edison power company's planners and managers makes fascinating reading. Throgmorton's discourse analysis moves into the detailed examination of meetings (city Energy Task Force meets energy planners), shedding light on the openness of items of lexis and tropes to varying interpretations. By way of a simple example, Throgmorton takes the use of the term 'city' in a survey of businesses; for one group, the term signified, by synecdoche, 'the board of aldermen and the political machine in Chicago', while community interest groups 'used *the city* as a metaphor, meaning *the city is us*.'¹⁹¹ As Throgmorton concludes:

There is a case for either construction, so one side is not purely right and the other damnably wrong. Rather, the key lesson is that no planning instruments can avoid persuasive, rhetorical construction of characters and communities. Scientistic talk of survey 'results' might obscure that crucial feature of planning, but cannot eliminate it ... The lesson is not to avoid or debunk surveys, but to understand how they must work tropally.¹⁹²

A rather different approach to discourse is adopted by Hajer, grounded in the work of Gramsci on hegemony, neo-Gramscian theory and on a Weberian concept of State legitimacy. In his 1989 *City Politics*¹⁹³, which focused on the urban political process in Oxford from 1960 to 1986, Hajer takes policy and ideology as 'the communication of meaning'.¹⁹⁴ With urban politicians and policy makers manoeuvring to create and implement developments in the built fabric, 'Discourses are understood as the ideological part of the hegemonic project.'¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ Throgmorton 1993 (note 175) p.342

¹⁹² Throgmorton 1993 (note 175) p.342

¹⁹³ Hajer, M. (1989) *City Politics: hegemonic projects and discourse* Aldershot: Gower Publishing Company Ltd (Avebury)

¹⁹⁴ *ibid* (note 193) chapter 4, pp.37-52

¹⁹⁵ *ibid* (note 193) p.37

A discourse for Hajer is a 'frame of reference'¹⁹⁶, and his research goes some way in tackling the language shaping what is thinkable by policy makers. Hajer notes the influence of Wittgenstein's concept of language games on his approach, games which enable social actors to communicate meaning:

Actors can, as it were, draw on a specific discourse - being a specific language game - to get their organisation of practices, rites and institutions dominant ... As Stuurman writes, to understand Wittgenstein's language games makes it possible to integrate the elements of *struggle* and *politics* in the analysis.¹⁹⁷

For Hajer, then, the study of the urban project is the study of how 'competing discourses [] get their interpretation of the state of affairs dominant.'¹⁹⁸ These struggles are best seen against a background of hegemony, where new urban or policy issues may (or may not) become the property of the hegemonic project in society.¹⁹⁹ The confiscation of high tech projects by British Conservative governments in the 1980s is proposed by Hajer as an illustration of the way inter-discursive struggle works. He is using a rather determinist view of available language and its effects:

Individuals observe, think, speak and act according to their perceptions of 'what is the case'. This perception is influenced by the fight of actors to get their view of 'what is the case' dominant.

In the discussion which follows, on 'Getting your view of reality dominant', Hajer looks at different forms of discursive domination and discursive success. With regard to the former, he draws extensively on Jessop's 1982²⁰⁰ discussion of the factors underlying discursive domination. Jessop identifies three modes by which a discourse theory may be hegemonic:

¹⁹⁶ *ibid* (note 193) p.40

¹⁹⁷ *ibid* (note 193) p.40; Stuurman, Siep (1985) *De Labyrintische Staat, over Politiek, ideologie en moderniteit* Amsterdam: SUA, p.144

¹⁹⁸ *ibid* (note 193) p.41

¹⁹⁹ Hajer gives the example of how high tech was 'confiscated' by the 'Thatcherite hegemonic project' - where 'the Left has not been able to show that high tech is no necessarily a right wing issue but could be used perfectly well in a clear Left wing programme'. *ibid* (note 193) p.41

²⁰⁰ Jessop, Bob (1982) *The Capitalist State, Marxist Theories and Methods* Oxford: Martin Robertson

1. The discourse of difference, where 'hegemony depends on the neutralisation of ideologically constituted antagonisms through their re-interpretation as difference within a national-popular collective will'.²⁰¹
2. The discourse of equivalence, where an appeal to the common interest is made in the face of a challenge. A common problem or enemy must be defeated for things to move forward, at which point other issues may be tackled.
3. The dichotomous discourse of antagonism. Here a 'two-nation project tries to establish hegemony based on the support of what are perceived as "strategically significant" groups of the population.'²⁰²

Hajer then moves on to a discussion of the various forms of discursive success, how effective appeal is established. He identifies three key features, 'the use of symbols, the creation of specific practices and the invention of a hegemonic principle'²⁰³. Hajer provides a series of examples from the urban policies and initiatives of the Greater London Council in the late 1970s / early 1980s, showing how:

A few issues together can give people a sense of what the hegemonic project is about. People are not necessarily able to put this into words ... The discourse glues the hegemonic project together by means of text, and by the communication of meaning through symbols, practices and routines.²⁰⁴

However, as Hajer notes, there will necessarily be contradictions in this 'hegemonic project' - for this is 'how ideology works'.²⁰⁵

In *The Politics of Environmental Discourse* (1995)²⁰⁶, Hajer's approach to the analysis of discourse in political contexts can be seen to have moved on to 'the socio-cognitive

²⁰¹ *ibid* (note 200) p.197

²⁰² *ibid* (note 193) p.43

²⁰³ *ibid* (note 193) p.45

²⁰⁴ *ibid* (note 193) p.46

²⁰⁵ *ibid* (note 193) p.46

processes in which so-called "discourse coalitions" are formed.'²⁰⁷ Discourse is taken as playing a constitutive role in political processes, although in a dual structure, whereby 'social action originates in [the] human agency of clever, creative human beings'.²⁰⁸ This, however, must be taken in 'a context of social structures of various sorts that both enable and constrain their agency'.²⁰⁹

This leads Hajer to be very specific about the role of language in social constructs, and he sees a close inter-relationship between 'linguistic structures and the formation of preferences'. Here Hajer seems to favour a form of the Sapir / Whorf hypothesis:

In this book, language is seen as an integral part of reality, as a specific communicative practice which influences the perception of interest and preference ... Interests are intersubjectively constituted through discourse.²¹⁰

Hajer then goes on to suggest that the developments of new policy discourses, like, say, ecological modernization, may in fact change individual understandings of options, and hence lead to the creation of new political 'discourse coalitions'. In effect, then, language in use does not presuppose an immobile way of arguing things. Rather:

... discursive interaction (i.e. language in use) can create new meanings and new identities, i.e. it may alter cognitive patterns and create new cognitions and new positionings. Hence discourse fulfills a key role in processes of political change.²¹¹

Hajer goes on to argue for in-depth research into the practices by which discursive dominance is realised, 'by what means specific contentions are furthered'.²¹² He puts

²⁰⁶ Hajer, Maarten A. (1995) *The Politics of Environmental Discourse: ecological modernization and the policy process* Oxford: Clarendon Press

²⁰⁷ *ibid* (note 206) p.58

²⁰⁸ *ibid* (note 206) p.58

²⁰⁹ *ibid* (note 206) p.58

²¹⁰ *ibid* (note 206) p.59

²¹¹ *ibid* (note 206) p.59

²¹² *ibid* (note 206) p.60

forward two middle-range concepts around which a given issue may be studied: storylines and discourse coalitions.²¹³ These are concepts by which Hajer aims to explain the middle ground 'between *epistèmes* and individual constructions',²¹⁴ and he takes storylines as a sort of discursive glue holding a given discourse coalition together. Thus:

The reproduction of a discursive order is then found in the routinization of the cognitive commitments that are implicit in these storylines.²¹⁵

Hajer, in his research, investigates the discourse coalitions which have grown up around ecological modernisation, based on a set of powerful and convincing storylines which he sees as taking the place of complex professional debates in the wider arena. These storylines not only provide social actors with a framework within which to interpret their specific contributions, but they can also influence actors' production of knowledge. And here Hajer gives the example of the passage of the 'precautionary principle', one of the main storylines in the ecological modernization discourse, into the discourse of mainstream academic science writing.

For Hajer, the policy issue of environmental organization is essentially a discursive construct, the core of which lies in the meanings to be attached to certain physical and social phenomena. The analysis of storylines and 'the specific discursive practices in which they are produced'²¹⁶ is the methodology by which policy issues may be most effectively apprehended. The linguistic interest is clear ('the interaction between linguistic structures and the formation of preferences'²¹⁷). Nevertheless, Hajer's approach to language in this work, as in the earlier *City Politics, hegemonic projects and discourse*, remains at the level of the broad communicative practices in a policy discourse. The importance of *The Politics of Environmental Discourse*, from my point of view, lies in its suggestion that as new policy discourses emerge, they may change individual understanding of problems and so open up space for the formation of new, unexpected political coalitions. This notion, along with Hajer's concept of the

²¹³ *ibid* (note 206); for storylines, see especially pp.62-64, and for discourse coalitions, pp.65-67

²¹⁴ *ibid* (note 206) p.66

²¹⁵ *ibid* (note 206) p.65

²¹⁶ *ibid* (note 206) p.72

²¹⁷ *ibid* (note 206) p.59

bases of discursive hegemony (credibility, acceptability and trust),²¹⁸ are important to the present study of a specific State and professional discourse on unfit housing. However, unlike the majority of the research on planning and policy issues discussed here, I hope to develop the linguistic angle in more detail. Although I appreciate broadbrush, discursive research on policy issues - especially for the skill with which most of it is grounded in social theory - I am sometimes left with the impression that the linguistic evidence is treated in all too anecdotal a fashion. Nevertheless, much of the policy oriented research reviewed here is seemingly underpinned by a claim that language influences thought, i.e. that our mental experience of the world is shaped by linguistic structures.

This relationship is one which has exercised numerous linguists - see for example, the work of M.A.K. Halliday. If it is to be useful for planning and policy research, then actual linguistic usage needs to be taken seriously. The representations of the world encoded in planning documents and reports, as well as in the journalistic writing on urban issues, needs to be tackled from the angle of the details of their construction. The choice of an image or a phrase is not (or rarely) gratuitous. Thus, while I draw on some the recent work by planning researchers on discourse, most notably Hajer, whom I find particularly helpful for his notion of storylines and discursive coalitions, I feel that it is necessary to push the linguistic analysis further to establish a better understanding of the ideological practices of representation in a given discursive domain.

Language and image must therefore be given detailed treatment. While the work reviewed in this sub-section is often good on context, it could at times be strengthened by actual close textual analysis. The aim of chapter 5 of the present dissertation is to bring this form of analysis to two closely related corpora. Both contain complex linguistic data. In order to produce a readable, comprehensible analysis, I have to combine discussion of the context of production (chiefly to be found in chapter 4), and a textual approach to the mechanics of representation. This chapter has reviewed a number of critical linguistic approaches to the partialities of discourse at work, chiefly in media writing. The chapter now closes with a short review (sub-section 3.7) of some of the tools I use in analysing the linguistic shaping of representations of deprivation and authority as mediated through the issue of unfit housing.

²¹⁸ *ibid* (note 36) see discussion p.59 ff.

3.7 On the linguistics of representation: items from an analytical toolkit - and a note on context

In this section, I move from discourse as interpretative framework to the mechanics of analysing linguistic representations. Discourse analysis, as has been seen from the above examination of recent research into the construction of various issues, can involve a wide range of techniques: it can be based on descriptive categories derived from systemic grammar, or it can be much broader, taking discourse as 'a complex set of values, thought and practices - which *include* communicative acts'.²¹⁹ As Mills notes:

... texts are determined by a wide range of pressures on their processes of production and reception, and also have an effect on their audience and on the processes of production of further texts.²²⁰

The question for the researcher is to identify the set of analytic tools most appropriate to the questions posed. If I posit that a given text contains a certain viewpoint or set of views by which the writer(s) aim to create a role for the reading public, the issue becomes one of what tools, what analysis is most suitable to bring out the mechanics of the dominant code. In this dissertation, I follow Mills and take the dominant reading to be:

a position (or positions) which the text offers or proffers to the reader within a particular historic moment, because of the range of ideological positions available which make that text understandable.²²¹

For the purposes of this dissertation, I propose to be rather eclectic in my choice of tools for linguistic analysis. Fowler, in his *Language in the News*²²² (1991), provides a broad discussion, often referred to by other recent researchers, of concepts like transitivity, nominalization and lexical structure, based to an extent on Hallidayan

²¹⁹ Richardson, Tim (1997) 'Constructing the policy process: creating a new discourse of trans-European transport planning'. unpublished paper given at the XIth congress of the Aesop, Nijmegen, The Netherlands, 28-31 May 1997, p.1

²²⁰ Mills, Sara (1992) 'Knowing your place: a Marxist feminist stylistic analysis' p.185 in M. Toolan (ed) *Language, Text and Context* London: Routledge, pp.182-205

²²¹ *ibid* (note 218) p.191

²²² Fowler, Roger (1991) *Language in the News* London: Routledge. See especially chapter 5, pp.66-90, where Fowler provides what he calls a 'menu' of useful categories.

linguistics. I draw on these categories, but the frame of source texts is wider, taking in planning documents as well as news - which makes a consideration of interdiscursivity important.

Lexical structure, as is clear from the work analysed earlier in this chapter, is of crucial importance to discourse research. Here, in terms of theoretical underpinning, I touch upon the much debated Sapir-Whorf²²³ hypothesis, bridging as it does the relative differences between languages and their power to determine our thought patterns. As Whorf put it:

We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages ... the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organised in our minds - and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds.²²⁴

Taken at its most extreme, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis would have it that a speaker group's perception of the world is structured by the terms available in the 'mental map' constructed by the language. Lexis is obviously important to this map - although I do not follow the extreme version of this theory. (In my case study, language resources are too fluid and varied, allowing critical questioning of the language usages present). To refer back to Fowler:

... the vocabulary of a language, or of a variety of a language, amounts to a map of the objects, concepts, processes and relationships about which the culture needs to communicate.²²⁵

The map metaphor as regards lexis I find particularly useful, containing as it does the idea of a way through a cultural labyrinth or fabric via the display of the information useful to that culture. As Fowler puts it, 'Vocabulary can be regarded ... as a representation of the world *for* a culture'.²²⁶

Lexicalisation, the use of vocabulary in context, is clearly crucial in dramatising a situation, creating a mood or promoting a viewpoint. Thus the discourse analyst

²²³ Whorf, B.L. (1956) *Language, Thought and Reality* ed. J.B. Carroll Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press

²²⁴ *ibid* (note 223) pp.213-14

²²⁵ *ibid* (note 222) p.80

²²⁶ *ibid* (note 222) p.82

needs to examine how the world is divided up, what aspects are emphasised. It is through vocabulary that areas of concern are most clearly expressed and dominant (and other positions) defined and the setting for debate established.

With regard to vocabulary, Fowler also mentions *re-lexicalisation* ('the promotion of a new term where it is claimed that a new concept is at issue'²²⁷), and *over-lexicalisation*, a concept brought to the fore by Halliday in his discussion of anti-languages. Fowler defines over-lexicalisation as being the use of 'quasi-synonymous terms for entities and ideas that are a particular preoccupation ... in a culture's discourse.'²²⁸ This, along with the connotations of labelling, to which it is closely related, will be seen as clearly important in the reproduction of ideology in official discourse. Research into over-lexicalisation has already proved revelatory in such fields as the presentation of sexual stereotypes of women in British newspapers, with their proliferation of expressions. As Fowler notes:

The over-lexicalisation models a physical and sexual surplus, an exaggeration of the body and its expressiveness which is a central feature of the female paradigm.²²⁹ (In contemporary western culture, one might add).

No less important than lexicalisation in the encoding of a society's values is **transitivity**, 'the foundation of representation'.²³⁰ The discourse analyst will thus seek to examine variance in transitivity, why the active form is preferred to the passive in certain circumstances, and vice versa, and nominalisation, a phenomenon closely related to transitivity. In traditional grammars of European languages, transitivity refers to the difference between verbs which take an object (transitive verbs) and those which do not (intransitive verbs). For Halliday, however, transitivity is much more than this, for we are ultimately dealing with how the same phenomenon or event can be presented in different ways. Says Halliday, when we observe something:

'perceptually the phenomenon is all of a piece'; however, in discussing the phenomenon, a speaker must 'analyse it as a semantic configuration', i.e. the speaker 'must represent it as one particular structure of meaning'.²³¹

²²⁷ *ibid* (note 222) p.84

²²⁸ *ibid* (note 222) p.85

²²⁹ *ibid* (note 222) p.103

²³⁰ *ibid* (note 222) p.71

Actions and states may be expressed as verbs, and may be material (i.e. have a concrete effect on something in the world) or they may be mental or verbal.

Analysing the transitivity of these verbs gives us a semantic perspective on the ideas expressed in a given clause. The discourse analyst, in choosing transitivity as a focus area, is thus concerned with the positioning and sequence of elements in a clause as well as the syntactic variation. English, like French and other European languages, has active and passive forms available to express the same proposition ('The Prime Minister visited the factory'; the factory was visited by the Prime Minister'). In Arabic the situation is similar. The effect is, of course, to shift emphasis - and there must be motivations for the use of one form over the other. The task of the discourse analyst is to tease out the implications of these different forms.

A number of authors have noted that political processes, so important to media discourse, make frequent use verbs of speaking in their textual productions. Verbs such as 'indicated', 'argued', 'consulted', etc can carry a more or less significant semantic load according to their syntactic and lexical positioning. Or to use another example, take the *agentless passive* ('The people were moved out to their new homes', no agent given, etc), widely used to reduce the amount of text in English where space is at a premium (in headlines, for example). Which takes us on to the question of *nominalisation*, defined by Hatim and Mason as:

referring to whole processes by encapsulating them in a single noun.²³²

This phenomenon has been noted²³³ with respect to the discussion of political issues in British 'middle-class' newspapers, where intensive use is made of nominal forms. This would seem to be the case for much political and technical discourse. Nominalisations are thus to be analysed in terms of the verbs from which they derive; as Lee²³⁴ notes:

The nominalised form is generally used when speakers wish to express complex propositions containing embedded propositions.

²³¹ *ibid* (note 222) p.71 with quotations from M.A.K. Halliday (1985) *Introduction to Functional Grammar* London: Edward Arnold, p.101

²³² Hatim, B. and Mason, I. (1991) *Discourse and the Translator* London: Longman, p.242

²³³ *ibid* (note 222) p.75-80

²³⁴ Lee, D. (1992) *Competing Discourses: perspective and ideology in language* London: Longman, p.6

The question is, however, what the effects are of using nominals, 'whether the grammatical process of nominalisation is associated with the semantic process of reification'.²³⁵ Certain speech acts, in English for instance, the business of suggesting, advising, declaring, are easily transferred into nouns and hence into a kind of object. The same is true of urban processes, - take the noun 'regeneration' or the French term *aménagement*, with all that they encapsulate in terms of actors and processes.

In working through my two corpora, I do not systematically go through a check list of linguistic items, such as lexis and transitivity, involved in the construction of representation. Clearly lexical and other features are intertwined, and my approach is to consider lexis and say, transitivity together where appropriate. This has been the approach taken by other researchers. Sykes²³⁶ for example, analysing the construction of discrimination in discourse, is a case in point. From an examination of a speech by Enoch Powell, the right wing British politician, Sykes notes the means by which the human quality of an outgroup (immigrants) is minimised, there being:

a tendency in Powell's speech to describe immigrants and immigration in terminology more suitable for inanimate objects: *current rate of intake, the rate of net inflow, the total, a given total of immigrant population, yield, family units*.²³⁷

Thus lexical cohesion establishes a certain viewpoint - notably via 'the use of subordinate terms such as number(s), total(s), proportion(s), rate(s) as the subject of sentences', while frequent use is made of 'nominalisations with agent deletions (i.e. inflow)'.²³⁸

I now move on from the ways in which content is expressed in lexis and transitivity choices to the way in which evaluation is mediated by **modality**. In English, this evaluation can be expressed by the modal auxiliaries (may, might, must, etc), modal adverbs (perhaps, eventually, etc) and a range of other 'hedging' or qualifying forms (sort of, fairly, etc). As Lee notes, 'a wide range of linguistic resources [is] deployed in

²³⁵ *ibid* (note 234) p.6

²³⁶ Sykes, M. (1985) 'Discrimination in discourse' in Teun van Dijk (ed) *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, vol.4 *Discourse Analysis in Society* New York: Academic Press

²³⁷ *ibid* (note 232) p.163

²³⁸ *ibid* (note 232) p.163

the process of modalisation'²³⁹. Modality can be more or less explicit, depending on the utterer's interest, and as Fowler notes, has to do with truth, obligation, permission, and desirability. In the structuring of representation, attention to the diverse forms of modality is clearly important - an examination of these issues of truth and desirability, the certainty of action, of all kinds, approval (and disapproval) expressed in a press editorial, are all mediated through modal forms of one kind or another.

As stressed above, mainly in chapter 1, the approach adopted here regards language as much more than a mere means for communicating about the world. The symbolic dimension of language is important, its insertion into other modes of communication. Following Fowler, (and others), language is seen as 'a *practice*, a mode of action'.²⁴⁰ We use language to do things - but this doing always take place in a real context, which, along with the linguistic resources available, inevitably influences the production of language deemed suitable.

To link in with the present case study of professional and press discourse about an urban social issue, (developed in chapter 5), I want to conclude this short sub-section on the mechanics of linguistic representation by drawing attention to the importance of context. The categories discussed above are not to be taken as magic keys to the value systems of writers; as Fowler so well puts it:

Nor are these linguistic structures arcane, highly technical concepts offering a 'new knowledge' which has to be learned by rote, as some technical concepts in science. Rather, they are systematic ways of organizing and speaking about knowledge which one already has, the intuitive knowledge of linguistic structure which one has developed as a competent speaker of a language.²⁴¹

Thus no amount of counting-up of passive forms or nominalisations, or occurrences of a particular item of lexis, will tell the researcher something that they are not already really aware of, deep down. To return to Fowler:

The reason is that there is no constant relationship between linguistic structure and its semiotic significance.²⁴²

²³⁹ *ibid* (note 234) p.137

²⁴⁰ *ibid* (note 222) p.87

²⁴¹ *ibid* (note 222) p.89

Hence, the need for careful presentation of context. In the chapters dealing with substantive material, (chapters 5 and 6), I am dealing with a long running social issue, namely multi-occupancy housing, which in this particular case was first the object of official attention back in the 1930s. Major action was finally taken in the 1990s. Thus, as far as my critical discourse analysis is concerned - as is probably the case for most other policy issues - there was much research to be done to see how the issue was diagnosed and ultimately established in the period of the sample; this also implied research into the professional norms which would have inevitably influenced the framing of the issue. The next chapter thus documents the immediate setting.

As I hold that discourse derives its significance from the inter-relatedness of language, structure and context, chapter 4 with its emphasis on the socio-cultural determinants underpinning the creation of narratives in discourse is indispensable. This chapter on the contemporary Tunisian State, complementing the account of language use in sub-sections 1.4, 1.5 and 1.6, prepares the way for an examination of how, in linguistic terms, the representations of the sub-standard housing issue evolve in professional and media text. This knowledge of context is essential in building up a picture of the factors which explain the particular practices involved in the social representation of the unfit housing issue in a southern Mediterranean Arab state.

Before moving on into chapter 4, 'The discourse context: neo-patriarchy and State policy in second Republic Tunisia', I would like to conclude on a linguistic point regarding much of the discursive material to be used. The vast majority of the source material for chapter 4, and all the corpus material of chapter 5 and 6, is in languages other than English, mainly French for chapter 4, a mixture of French and varieties of written and spoken Arabic for the remaining two chapters.

Making my text selections accessible required a big effort in terms of translation into English. The aim was to produce readable quotations while remaining faithful to the intentions of the text producers. Quotations have to be faithful to the original lexis and to a similar extent to the syntactic structures, the bases of effective discourse analysis. A contextual feel has to be maintained by the translator. Sometimes I give original phrases in French, assuming this to be a language mastered by many of the potential readership. I hope I have managed to strike the right balance between translated quotation and interpretation, staying with the seeming oddities of the originals and rendering them available to a wider academic audience.

4

THE DISCOURSE CONTEXT: NEO-PATRIARCHY AND STATE POLICY IN SECOND REPUBLIC TUNISIA

In chapter 1, I examined some of the issues, linguistic and methodological, relative to doing research in Tunisia. I looked at something of the language resources available to Tunisians in their mapping(s) of the world of experience. The present chapter attempts to fill out this background with an account of the socio-political setting of the policy process. Sub-chapter 4.1 takes a brief look at the concept of neo-patriarchy, the term used by a number of recent writers (Sharabi 1988¹, Larif-Béatrix 1988²) to account for the nature of contemporary Arab political régimes. In sub-chapter 4.2, I focus on the actual research context: 'Consumer paradise gained? Tunisian in the 1990s' provides some background to the Tunisian republic and a more detailed account of the changes since the advent of what I refer to as the Novembrist or Second Republic in 1987 and the development of the country's self-proclaimed status as a 'Mediterranean dragon'. Extensive use is made of contemporary press material, both local international³, as well as of some secondary sources, notably Camau⁴, Flory and Korany (eds)⁵, Krichen⁶ and Bras⁷. In 4.3, the discussion focuses on housing and urban policy since the post- World War Two reconstruction period, with a particular focus on the decade 1987-97. The period since independence (1956-97) is seen as dividing up into three fairly distinct phases: a first period characterised by grand

¹ Sharabi, Hisham (1988) *Neopatriarchy. A theory of distorted change in Arab society* Oxford: Oxford University Press. Note that the term is spelt without a hyphen by Sharabi.

² Larif-Béatrix, Esma (1988) *Edification étatique et environnement culturel: le personnel politico-administratif dans la Tunisie contemporaine* Aix-en-Provence: Edisud

³ As regards the international press, the main sources of comment and feature articles are the French dailies *Libération* and *Le Monde*. There is no significant coverage in the Anglo-American press, apart from the occasional piece in *Middle East Report* and the *Financial Times*. The most widely published English language journalist writing on North Africa is Francis Ghilès, who essentially deals with economic development issues.

⁴ Camau, Michel (ed) (1987) *Tunisie au présent. Une modernité au-dessus de tout soupçon ?* Paris: Editions du CNRS

⁵ Flory, M. and Korany, B. (1990) *Les régimes politiques arabes* Paris: Presses universitaires de France

⁶ Krichen, Aziz (1992) *Le syndrome Bourguiba* Tunis: Cérès Editions

⁷ Bras, Jean-Philippe (1996) 'Ben Ali et sa classe moyenne' in *Pôles*, April-June 1996, pp.174-195

ambition, the influence of European master planners and attempts to eradicate low-income group illegal settlements (1956-c.1970); a second phase was characterised by pragmatism and laissez-faire, on the one hand, the recognition that low-income self-built housing areas would have to be serviced, and on the other, the development of low-cost State housing schemes and model projects (1970-c.1990); finally, the most recent phase, the 1990s, although still marked by continued urban expansion and widening home ownership, is also characterised by new concerns for the environment and housing upgrading, along with the development of substantial planned urban extensions (Cité du Lac de Tunis, Hammamet-Sud or the Taparura area in Sfax) and new industrial zones. The periodisation is perhaps somewhat approximate, but it provides the necessary framework in which to locate the Oukala Project, the slum clearance / rehousing scheme launched for the Médina of Tunis in late 1990.

A general account of the scheme is given in 4.4 (followed by a full chronology of key dates and figures). Broadly speaking, some 1,200 families were removed from unfit housing in central Tunis between 1992 and 1997, to be rehoused in three new estates on the western edge of the city. Sources are a range of planning documents⁸, magazine articles⁹ and unpublished *littérature grise*. The public rhetoric of the project, the language of *désoukalisation*, to use the rather awkward neologism of the 1990s, is very much in the tradition of an earlier policy for improving rural housing, the *dégourbification* policy, the removal of the *gourbis* or unfit, self-built rural dwellings and the provision (by the State) of *al-maskan al-la'iq*, fit or appropriate housing. The latter programme was especially a feature of early 1980s Tunisian housing policy, often referred to by President Bourguiba in speeches where *muqawamat al-jahl wal-fakr*, 'the struggle against ignorance and poverty' was very much the main theme. This account of the Oukala Project thus feeds into chapter 5, an examination of the social construction of the unfit housing issue through the analysis of the minutiae of formal linguistic and iconographic structure.

Finally, a little forecasting to conclude this opening for chapter 4. The themes introduced and developed in this chapter (State building, theoretical debates on the nature of the Tunisian polity, substantive background on urban policy) may seem a little abstract at this point. However, after the presentation of data in chapters 5 and 6, I will be returning to questions of State hegemony and the specifics of the Tunisian

⁸ See Appendix 1 for a full list.

⁹ For example Béjaoui, Faïka (1997) 'Le projet oukalas : renaissance d'une médina' in *Architecture méditerranéenne*, special number Tunisia, first half 1997, pp.107-111

case in sub-chapter 7.3 of the conclusion, 'Paternalist policy, hegemony and myth.' At this point, I return to neo-patriarchy, examining its usefulness as a concept for apprehending the Tunisian State and its practices.

4.1 Theorising the Tunisian State: the order of discourse - and the discursive practices of neo-patriarchy and modernisation

6 November 1997. (The week before 7 November 1997)
Early evening. The whole central *allée* of the avenue Bourguiba is taken up with a temporary gallery for an exhibition (labels in Arabic only) of the achievements of the ten years since Ben Ali took control. The atmosphere is one of mild curiosity - the people going through are mainly men in their teens and twenties - and some mild frustration that the *interactive multi-media screens* of the telecommunications stand are not actually interactive, just for display purposes. Lots of interest at Ministry of Employment minitel screens displaying jobs on offer.

The President is everywhere in photographs - at the beginning of the exhibition larger than life, photo mounted on cardboard against a giant photograph of a crowd of schoolchildren ('with Ben Ali towards the twenty first century'). First major display stand, Human Rights, with on the right, a whole stand (the most boring) given over to a display of A3-sized plaques, each with the date of a piece of 'human rights legislation' and a quote. Further on, 'The son of the people in the service of the people', a giant photo of the President with an elderly woman (place and date of visit in caption), surrounded by A3-sized plaques of the President - visiting the customs (the visit where he discovered that goods could remain stuck for six months in customs), with a blind man, a beneficiary of social housing ...

opposite is the President and his wife Leïla Ben Ali presiding an iftar table with six people, women on the left next to Leïla, men on the right next to the President, 'from across the Republic'. Next along the theme changes to women's rights, the President decorating women, well-known women figures presiding seminars, local and international in Tunis.

And so it goes on - technological achievements, scale-models of dams and new institutions, tables and graphs showing the increased levels of drinking-water provision, fall in poverty, growing number of housing units ... in the last section, the international achievements of Tunisia ('L'étonnant modèle tunisien' - 'The surprising Tunisian model') ... Tunisia on a world map, rather large, in red and in the middle, with dates and places of Presidential visits carefully marked. And at the end of the exhibition, the Tunisian armed forces participation in peace-keeping in Cambodia and somewhere in Africa ...

A section towards the middle of the exhibition deals with heritage: a huge scale model of the Antonine Baths in Carthage is the main feature. Opposite is a display of plaster mouldings of ancient statuary and Carthaginian (?) masks.. Little Arab-Muslim heritage, surprisingly. A slogan on a panel reads 'From State culture to a State of culture' ('*min thaqafat ad-dawla ila dawlat ath-thaqafa*') - the message being that official culture has been left behind, and that this is a country where there is much culture. A large photo next to the slogan features the statue of Ibn Khaldun in central Tunis taken from a low angle, the bulk of the statue standing out against a clear blue sky.

In its propaganda, contemporary Tunisian State discourse makes frequent references to earlier rulers of what is now Tunisia. Three emblematic figures - the ancient

general Hannibal, the mediaeval Arab historian and 'Arab state theorist' Ibn Khaldun, and the nineteenth century innovator Kheïreddine appear in speeches alongside references to the democratic features of the Carthaginian constitution, the avant-garde nature of Khaldunian thought, and the far-sighted reforms of the reforming general. Great achievements, great men - and all three came to feature on Tunisian banknotes in the early 1990s.

The selective use of fragments of the past is by no mean restricted to Tunisia. It forms an essential part of the legitimacy capital, to use Jean Leca's phrase, of all the Maghreb states. However, in a context where the régime, like its neighbours in Algeria and Libya, has only the barest resemblance to an elected democracy, but where many citizens are well informed of the workings of the democratic process thanks to satellite television, the uses of symbols and rhetoric, of particular discursive practices linked to the public positioning of the State, assume great importance. How then to theorise the Tunisian State? I take the literature on neo-patriarchy as a useful starting point. First, however a loop back into history.

The earliest reforms to create a modern State in Tunisia date back to the reign of Ahmed Bey (1883-1855)¹⁰, efforts continued under General Kheïreddine. However, in the words of Abdallah Laroui¹¹, this new state was seen as 'an instrument of pillage in the service of foreigners'. A variety of factors, not the least of which was European financial pressure, brought the country under French rule in 1881, a 'protectorate' which was to last until independence in 1956. At this point, the infant Tunisian State, under charismatic nationalist leader Habib Bouguiba, faced its Waterloo,

how to manage decolonisation, how to effect the takeover of a modern but foreign State, remove the colonising power from the economic field and obtain the evacuation of the military bases.¹²

In this post-independence climate, democratisation was on the agenda. However, although the new Tunisian Republic was to make great strides forward in extending education and healthcare to its citizens, the entry of the masses into the political scene was another matter. Writing for a 1991 publication, Leca suggests that Tunisia might

¹⁰ Brown, L. Carl (1974) *The Tunisia of Ahmed Bey* Princeton: Princeton University Press

¹¹ Laroui, Abdallah (1970) *L'histoire du Maghreb: un essai de synthèse* Paris: Maspéro, p.291

¹² Léveau, R. 'Des systèmes politiques confrontés aux exigences du changement social' in C. et Y. Lacoste (eds) *L'Etat du Maghreb*, p333 Tunis: Cérès Productions, pp.333-337

be characterised as 'an authoritarian bureaucratic republic' where the 'official political scene is still overwhelmingly dominated by the former single party'¹³. Since this was written, the Tunisian economy has opened up considerably. Nevertheless, there remains the tension - noted by Camau for other Maghreb régimes - between

the claim [to satisfy] the norms and attributes of the modern State by the régimes, on the one hand, and the traditionalisation of the methods of exercising power on the other¹⁴.

The Tunisian socio-economist Aziz Krichen refers to this blockage or failure to evolve democratic institutions as 'the Bourguiba syndrome'¹⁵ (see discussion below). In fact, the perceived difficulty of Middle Eastern and North African régimes to move towards representative forms of democracy has exercised a number of commentators, both within and outside the region.

Neo-patriarchy or neo-patrimonialism: the main theorists

A number of commentators have worked on the patriarchal (Fr: *patrimonial*, *patriarcal*; Ar: *abawi*) nature of the Arab state and its apparatus, exploring the nature of régime legitimacy in a context characterised by strong religious belief and rapid technological change. In the case of Tunisia, important work has been done by Camau (1973¹⁶, 1984¹⁷) and Larif-Béatrix¹⁸. Bill and Leiden¹⁹ examine patterns of patriarchy in the Middle East, while Waterbury²⁰ and Leca²¹ look at the legitimisation

¹³ Leca, Jean (1991) 'Culture, régimes politiques et économie. Le Maghreb à la fin du siècle' in C. et Y. Lacoste (eds) *L'Etat du Maghreb*, p.329 Tunis: Cérès Productions, pp.327-332

¹⁴ Camau, Michel (1991) 'Le Maghreb' in M. Flory and B. Korany (eds) 1990) *Les régimes politiques arabes* p.438 Paris: Presses universitaires de France, pp.369-450

¹⁵ *ibid* (note 6)

¹⁶ Camau, Michel (1973) 'Le discours politique de légitimité des élites tunisiennes' in M. Teitler et al (1973) *Elites, pouvoir et légitimité au Maghreb* Paris: Editions du CNRS, pp.29-72

¹⁷ Camau, Michel (1984) 'L'Etat tunisien : de la tutelle au désengagement, portée et limites d'une trajectoire' in *Maghreb / Machrek* 103, Jan-Mar 1984, pp.8-38

¹⁸ *ibid* (note 2)

¹⁹ Bill, J.A. and Leiden, C. (1974) 'Patterns of patrimonialism in the Middle East' in *The Middle East: politics and power* Boston: Allyn and Bacon, pp.104-122

²⁰ Waterbury, John (1977) 'La légitimation du pouvoir au Maghreb: tradition, protestation et repression' in *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord* Paris: Editions du CNRS, pp.411-422

of power in the Maghreb. The difficulty lies in defining the sense of adjectives like 'patrimonial' and '(neo)-patriarchal', so often used to characterise Middle Eastern and North African régimes. Bill and Leiden provide a useful definition of patriarchy, (quoted in Waterbury²²). According to their definition, the term would cover a régime characterised by the overvaluation of the head of state as 'guide', the proximity of a close circle of faithful followers to the leader, the undervaluing of institutions with an emphasis on informal processes, the demonstration of military prowess and the expansion of official religion, and finally a certain immobility due to the fragile balances maintained by political conflicts and games of internal rivalry.

Waterbury, writing in the late 1970s, saw the Tunisian régime of the *suprême combattant* Habib Bourguiba (1956-87) as satisfying the criteria of patriarchy - without, however, the leader and his entourage seeking legitimacy in some remote Golden Age. Other commentators, notably Guenther²³, have seen new forms of patrimonialism emerging, where personal rulership is based on networks of loyalty demanding no belief in the unique qualifications of the leader, but rather being inextricably tied up with material rewards of various kinds. The most important contemporary Arab theorist of patriarchy and neo-patriarchy is undoubtedly Hisham Sharabi, however.

Distorted modernisation: Sharabi's concept of neo-patriarchy

With reference to the Arab Middle East, the patrimonial theme is most widely explored in Hisham Sharabi's 1988 work *Neopatriarchy, a theory of distorted change in Arab society*²⁴. For Sharabi, neopatriarchy, or modernized patriarchy, is the dominant social form in Arab countries, the product of the meeting of expanding, modernizing Europe and the Arab awakening or *nahdha* of the nineteenth century. In this polemical and sometimes rather rhetorical work, Arab patriarchy is 'a specific psychosociological totality which is encountered in social and psychological structures'²⁵. The origins of these structures are to be explained through an

²¹ Leca, Jean (1977) 'Réformes institutionnelles et légitimation du pouvoir au Maghreb' in *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord* Paris: Editions du CNRS, pp.4-13

²² see *ibid* (note 19) p.412

²³ Guenther, Roth (1968) 'Personal leadership, patrimonialism and empire building in the new states' in *World Politics* 20 (1967-68), pp.195-206

²⁴ *ibid* (note 1)

²⁵ *ibid* (note 1) p.17

examination of traditional family organisation. Drawing on the work of Jean Piaget on the dialectic between heteronomy and autonomy as systems of value and social organisation, Sharabi sees Arab society as nurturing a state of heteronomy, of unilateral respect which 'generates in a child an ethic of obedience,...characterized by subordination to another's will'²⁶. In patriarchal and neopatriarchal society, according to Sharabi, the transition to autonomy is never completed; the Arab family 'continues to nurture the values and attitudes of heteronomy'²⁷.

Sharabi uses a powerful quotation from William Reich to support his argument and underscore the social significance of the problem:

It creates the individual who is forever afraid of life and of authority and thus creates again and again the possibility that masses of people can be governed by a handful of powerful individuals.

The difficulty with this argument lies of course in seeing how Arab society (and it should be remembered that prior to the sixties, many Arab states had multi-ethnic populations with a plurality of religious groups) is particularly different from, say, southern European or Latin American societies. The divided, antagonistic sovereignties of the Arab states are thus seen by Sharabi as something quite new.

The meeting of rational, secular, modernization and patriarchy have produced a found contradiction in Sharabi's view - experienced with great difficulty by modernized intellectuals, 'the group in which the structural duality and contradictions of society are clearly most apparent'²⁸. For this group, modernity is 'a reflected, fetishized practice, both dependent and non-critical'²⁹.

With this 'fetishization' of modernity, and despite the vast advances made in integrating the mass of the population into the body politic (by which Sharabi presumably means modern state form), through the institutions and processes of modern education, military conscription and the like, multi-party democracy had yet to arrive at the time of writing. Rather Sharabi observed 'a sliding back to new forms

²⁶ *ibid* (note 1) p.44

²⁷ *ibid* (note 1) p.45

²⁸ *ibid* (note 1) p.24

²⁹ *ibid* (note 1) p.25

of the petty sultanate based, as in the past, on unrestricted personal power, but rendered virtually impregnable (both in the "progressive" and conservative régimes) by the modern apparatus of control now available to the State³⁰.

Sharabi's long essay on neopatriarchy is perhaps a little too diffuse, and there remains the question of empirical work to support many of his assertions - notably on the supposed link between paternal authority / family structure and the maintenance of the neo-patriarchal state. Other writers, however, have produced more empirically grounded accounts of the operation of neo-patriarchy. With respect to the Maghreb, Leca and Larif-Béatrix are both important, while Médard looks at varying degrees of neo-patrimonialism across Africa.

Other definitions of neo-patriarchy: Leca and Médard

Leca³¹, writing on the legitimation of power in the Maghreb refers to Eisenstadt's 1973 definition of neopatrimonialism³². This, according to the latter, resides in the importance given to the political centre, its vocation to represent social, moral and even cosmic order, and the will of its élites to concentrate social power in their hands along with the main symbols of order. Geertz, also cited by Leca³³ develops a new set of criteria for judging régimes in the 'new states', namely nationalism, autocracy and the level of 'Singaporisation'. Nationalism legitimates existing élites, and eliminates older, competing forms of legitimation. Autocracy is the process by which governments make themselves more or less invulnerable to the pressures arising from political groups that they do not control. Singaporisation recognises that 'development' is a much less diffusionist concept than the 'Great Transformation' of agrarian Europe described by Karl Polanyi.

The concepts patrimonialism and neopatrimonialism also figure in debates on political systems in other areas of Africa. For Médard³⁴, working on sub-Saharan Africa:

³⁰ *ibid* (note 1) pp.59-60

³¹ *ibid* (note 21)

³² Eisenstadt, S.N. (1973) *Traditional Patrimonialism and Modern Neo-Patrimonialism Sage Research Papers in the Social Sciences n°90* Beverly Hills: Sage Publications

³³ *ibid* (note 21) pp.8-9

³⁴ Médard, J.-F. (1991) 'The historical trajectories of the Ivorian and Kenyan states' in James Manor (ed) (1991) *Rethinking Third World Politics* London: Longman, pp.185-212

Patrimonial refers to an ideal type where the public domain is not distinguished from the private. Neo-patrimonialism refers to a modified type which supposes an articulation between two contradictory logics: patrimonial logic and bureaucratic logic. The distinction between the public and private domains exists but it is not respected.³⁵

According to this concept of patrimonialism, the degree of separation varies between the two domains, with Zaïre a patrimonial extreme. In these terms, Tunisia, with its long tradition of organized central government and lowkey presidency (in material terms), is barely neopatrimonial. A useful concept in Médard's article is what he refers to as 'the "logic of the big man", by which the political entrepreneur multiplies his economic resources by use of his political resources'³⁶, and vice versa. The 'big man' must create a balance between accumulation and distribution, between economic and political power.

On neo-patrimonialism and the Bourguiba syndrome: recent Tunisian writings

In her *Edification étatique et environnement culturel*, (State Building and Cultural Environment), Asma Larif-Béatrix (1988)³⁷ approaches the relationship between State and civil society through and examination of politico-administrative élites in contemporary Tunisia. She seeks to examine how these élites reflect the relationship between 'a strongly leader-focused political system and a Tunisian society which is much more dominated than integrated'³⁸. These traits she traces back to mainly historic factors:

The essentially secular programme of the nationalist élite in a traditionalist environment condemned it to dissimulation and ambiguity during the anti-colonial struggle, and then to the appropriation, after taking power, of the beylical heritage, including some of its patrimonial traits, to achieve its objectives at the least cost.³⁹

³⁵ *ibid* (note 34) p.208

³⁶ *ibid* (note 34) p.208

³⁷ *ibid* (note 2)

³⁸ *ibid* (note 2) p.179

³⁹ *ibid* (note 2) p.179

Larif-Béatrix, in her project of examining the Tunisian politico-administrative élite, is fully aware of the inadequacy of a purely statistical approach 'to account for a style of government like neopatrimonialism'⁴⁰ - hence the use of other information to complement the lengthy statistical parts of her study. Ultimately, however, it is the statistical side which dominates, doubtless because of the difficulty of interviewing members of a closely knit power élite. The quantitative approach makes it difficult to account for the often spectacular rises and falls of high level political personnel during the early to mid-eighties, and other practices reflecting traditional ways of handling power.

Larif aims to demonstrate that the leaders of post-independence Tunisia really did not have much choice in the means at their disposal, and that they could not introduce modernising reforms democratically. Neopatrimonialism was (or still is to a certain extent) 'a quasi-technical strategy or solution to create a modern secular society in which religion would be a simple, private matter'⁴¹.

According to Bill and Leiden, quoted by Larif-Béatrix⁴², the failure of development can be attributed to the permanence and persistence of the patrimonial policies of governments. The problem is of course that the teleological concept of development fails to take into account the wide variety of levels of development, the accelerations and slowdowns across the world. Within what is referred to in academic circles and media discourse as the 'Arab World' (*le Monde arabe*, *al-'alam al-'arabi*), levels of politico-economic development and leadership styles vary widely⁴³.

Aziz Krichen, writing in the early 1990s has an interesting take on the Tunisian post-independence leadership style which he sees as so marked by its first leader that it is legitimate to refer to 'the Bourguiba system'. In a collection of three lengthy essays published in Tunis in 1992⁴⁴, Krichen explores the genesis, failings and ultimate decadence of Bourguibist rule. The papers, one of which was serialised in *La Presse de Tunisie* in 1991, are a sometimes uneasy mix of popular psychology, political history and contemporary macro-economics. The first essay, 'La filiation difficile' is

⁴⁰ *ibid* (note 2) p.175

⁴¹ *ibid* (note 2) p.290

⁴² *ibid* (note 2) p.290

⁴³ On this see Ayyubi, Nazih (1995) *Overstating the Arab State* London: I.B. Tauris

⁴⁴ *ibid* (note 6)

interesting for its exploration of the paradoxes of a patriarchal régime (although Krichen never uses this qualifier), struggling to build modernity. I provide a short account of some of the main features of Krichen's argument for their relevance to the neo-patriarchy theme. In fact, *Le syndrome Bourguiba* represents perhaps the most astute recent commentary on the Tunisian political system; other local writers such as Ridha El Kafi⁴⁵ and Chaâbane⁴⁶ adopt a highly complacent, consensus view of the system.

Krichen gives a quirky, somewhat broadbrush psychological background to the Bourguibist system. He sees the régime, in its mimetic modernisation programme, as having experimented with all three forms of power described by Weber in the period 1956-86:

it began as a charismatic power, striving towards an ambitious modernisation, and when the impetus ran out, it declined into traditional power. The last period of Bourguiba's reign - with its seraglio and its favourites, its intrigues, courtisans, adventurers and hidden councillors - was no different from the beylical form of the pre-colonial State.⁴⁷

To return to President Bourguiba himself, he was the charismatic leader par excellence:

Of this personage we know the myth - the builder of the State, the founder of the Nation, the demi-God from whom everything begins - and we know the reality - the leader of the people from the depths of the country, not a shaper, but himself shaped in the human clay of the humanity of this country, and who, for almost half a century, assimilated himself with Tunisia to the point that he personified it, with its ambitions and impetuses, and also its contradictions and incoherences.⁴⁸

The underlying flaw in the system, Krichen seems to indicate, was what he terms 'a crisis of filiation', a refusal of the paternal heritage - by the man who saw himself as

⁴⁵ El Kafi, Ridha (1994) *La maison Tunisie: essai de géopolitique* Tunis: Cérès (collection Enjeux)

⁴⁶ Chaâbane, Sadok (1996) *Ben Ali et la voie pluraliste en Tunisie* Tunis: Cérès

⁴⁷ *ibid* (note 6) p.189

⁴⁸ *ibid* (note 6) p.33

the father of the Nation - and ultimately an incapacity to be a father in the sense of 'guaranteeing the conditions for the continuity and survival of his own ambition'.⁴⁹

Bourguiba was able to admit a feminine presence (hence the avant-garde legislation, for a Muslim country, on the status of women and the family). But of acknowledging male or paternal antecedents, there was no question. ('He had not come to ensure the succession, but to found a new order, his own.'⁵⁰). All forbearers were eradicated: his political elders, notably Abdelaziz Thaâlabi, founder of the independence movement, were criticised and condemned; once in power, the country's past disappeared - 'All the great figures who marked the construction of our historic personality were eliminated one after the other.'⁵¹

With similar ferocity, Bourguiba was to attack his potential political heirs. In 1969, at the age of 70, no longer able to play the role of both head of State and head of government, he created the post of prime minister. (Many other political rivals had already been eliminated). As of 1970, the prime minister, also secretary general of the ruling party, was also effectively prospective successor. The four prime ministers from 1970-1987, presented by the Leader as his intellectual heirs, were to be unwitting actors in a three act drama: rapid rise to the forefront of the State, a phase of intrigues, and the final act, a lingering dismemberment. Under Mohamed Mzali, the last major prime minister under Bourguiba, the political direction of the country was increasingly chaotic. Despite the sterility of the élite, there was no positive internal opposition. And although Bourguiba 'realised better than anyone that the stability of the State required the regular functioning of its institutions'⁵², he was ultimately unable to follow the modernist project to its logical conclusion:

The authoritarian State which the modernist élites presented as the spearhead of social progress in actual fact had roots in the darkest and most reactionary heritage of the old society.⁵³

⁴⁹ *ibid* (note 6) p.37

⁵⁰ *ibid* (note 6) p.35

⁵¹ *ibid* (note 6) p.36

⁵² *ibid* (note 6) p.40

⁵³ *ibid* (note 6) p.175

The mimetic modernisation of Tunisian society, where '... the State is considered as the sole repository of modernity', where 'in all fields, in all circumstances and in a discrete fashion, the top dictates to the bottom its line of conduct'⁵⁴, is noted by commentators on other Maghreb states: with reference to Algeria, Leca and Vatin⁵⁵ use the term *sultanisme populaire*, while Laroui⁵⁶ characterises the Moroccan régime as being strongly marked by the earlier practices of the *Etat sultanien*.

Abdallah Laroui: modernity and State building in the Maghreb

For the Moroccan historian and theorist Abdallah Laroui, the nature of the contemporary Maghreb State is to be considered in the light of modernity, and the conflicts between modernity and traditional society. For Laroui, modernity is to be seen as 'a necessity, the legitimacy of which is based on a project of emancipation through rationality and technology.'⁵⁷ The traditional Islamic State, a loosely articulated entity, unlike the modern liberal State, did not permeate all levels of society. Arab societies, for most of their history, have been ruled by a 'sultanian State', and today these societies develop under two modes of government, 'mamluk sultanism and rational organisation'. Arab states today:

... contain in actual fact the characteristics of the two modes. The cause of this duality resides in the cleavage between the political sphere and civil society, between authority and material and moral power, between State and individual. This cleavage is a legacy of the old sultanian State.⁵⁸

Laroui's theorisation of the Maghreb State is obviously close to Krichen's account of Tunisia suffering from a form of charismatic leader syndrome. Both writers are concerned with the problematic of modernisation. The societal cleavage, as I hope to show later, is particularly apparent in the instrumentalisation of technical rationality, in the uses (and abuses) of information, and in the elaboration and deployment of

⁵⁴ *ibid* (note 6) p.175

⁵⁵ Leca, Jean and Vatin, J.-C. (1979) 'Le système politique algérien, 1976-1978' in Jean Leca (ed) *Développement politique au Maghreb* Paris: Editions du CNRS

⁵⁶ Laroui, Abdallah (1983) *Mafhoum ad-dawla* Casablanca: Markaz ath-thaqafi al-'arabi, p.122-123

⁵⁷ Mansouri, Driss (1993) 'Laroui ou l'obsession de la modernité' in Abdou Filali Ansary and Mohamed Tozy (eds) (1993) *Penseurs maghrébins contemporains* Tunis: Cérès Productions, pp.197-225

⁵⁸ *ibid* (note 56), pp.168-169, quoted in Driss Mansouri, *ibid* (note 57) pp.222-223

symbolic resources. The order of discourse of independent Tunisia, the endless movement between things said and things done, text and context, is the result of a specific set of circumstances, constantly reinforced by linguistic conventions and discursive practice.

On theorising a post-colonial State: a neo-patriarchal order of discourse?

This order of discourse prevailing in Tunisia, I wish to qualify as neo-patriarchal, as a hegemonic project based upon the technophilia and rationality of modernity and an appeal to the past to resolve legitimacy conflicts. However, before establishing a framework of the main elements of neo-patriarchy, I wish to emphasise the common ground shared by developing countries, including Tunisia, as the State takes up the slack left by the departing colonial power.

For Hawthorn, (1991: 38), two major problems face Third World states as they construct themselves. Firstly:

the political problem of occupying (and often first defining) the 'social space' and of then legitimising that occupation, and the economic problem of engineering some economic development.⁵⁹

Hawthorn considers that these 'are the only two safe generalities' for the Third World. However, although the politics of Third World countries

is usually framed in a language of democratic constitutionalism, ...it also enshrines a set of political ideas and practices, more idiosyncratic and various than either the common ends or the constitutional rules, with which the ends are pursued and with which the institutions in the constitutions are actually mad to work.⁶⁰

Understanding Third World politics for Hawthorn is thus all about understanding how the ambition to increase wealth and capture social space is formulated, how constitutions and institutions are shaped to achieve these ends, and what results are achieved and difficulties met in the practical world. For the proponent of

⁵⁹ Hawthorn, G. (1991) "'Waiting for the Text': comparing Third World Politics' in James Manor (ed)

⁶⁰ *ibid* (note 59) p.32

neopatriarchy, this may seem an overly reductive approach to the subtleties of state development. As Bayart puts it, referring to the different forms of state building,

... delimitation of the scenarios of inequality will remain highly approximate as long as they do not include cultural representations through which social groups are assembled. In spite of what Marxist economic determinism may say, social classes, or more generally, social categories, are also communities of morals, ideals and values.⁶¹

Which is where the concept of neo-patriarchy comes in to provide a broad, general framework for analysis. Summarising heavily, Sharabi's definition of neo-patriarchy suggests a régime which consists in the extension of the psycho-social structures of the traditional patriarchal family to the modern nation State, with social life characterised by authoritarian methods and the establishment of a relationship of dominance / dependence. Neo-patriarchy thus differs from the Weberian notion of 'traditional domination'. For the present analysis, however, I take neo-patriarchy as a broad analytic framework; the following chief characteristics of the neo-patriarchal régime, categorised by Camau in his discussion of 'Powers and institutions' in the Maghreb, seems particularly useful. The wide notion of neo-patriarchy I adopt here contains the following elements:

- the '**statisation**' (*étatisation*) of society: low degree of autonomy of social institutions linked to a trend towards the monopolisation of all powers by a political centre holding the infrastructure and logistics of the modern state;
- the '**privatisation**' of the State: appropriation and private management of the State by governmental élites, with interpersonal relationships prevailing over institutions;
- the '**clientelisation**' of society: allocation of resources following the principal, not to say exclusive criterion of mobilising allegiances;
- recourse to **paternalist imagery** in political relations; representation of the 'good governor', full of concern and mindful of the well-being of the governed, identified as members of the same family.⁶²

⁶¹ Bayart, J.F. (1991) 'Finishing with the idea of the Third World: the concept of the political trajectory' pp.58-59 in James Manor (ed) (1991) *Rethinking Third World Politics* London: Longman, pp.51-71

These features can of course in no way be seen as exclusive to Arab and Islamic governments. They are dynamic, shifting, and the relative importance of each element differs across the Maghreb countries. Each state has its own particular trajectory. The problem with the concept of neo-patriarchy as defined by Sharabi is that it seems to make no allowance for change and particularities. In a sense, it can be viewed as a continuation of earlier Orientalist discourse on the nature of the Arab State which tended to portray the relationship between rulers and ruled as necessarily problematic - rather like the discourse on the 'Arab city'. Essentially, I find Camau's definition useful as an aid to tackling the issue of the cultural representations acting as a sort of 'social glue', as a way of focusing on the specificities of the Tunisian case and the policy initiative under study. In the next section, I move on to the last decade in Tunisian history, a time of growing socio-economic prosperity and a period claimed by the régime as one of political change.

⁶² Camau, Michel (1990) 'Le Maghreb' p. 418 in M. Flory and B. Korany (eds) *Les régimes politiques arabes* Paris: Presses universitaires de France, pp.369-450

4.2 Consumer paradise gained? Tunisia in the 1990s

There is very little academic writing in English with a critical slant on the politico-economic developments of the last decade in Tunisia. There are a good number of papers in French, of which one of the most useful is Jean-Philippe Bras' 'Ben Ali et sa classe moyenne'⁶³ ('Ben Ali and his middle class'). In the main French dailies, however, there are occasional articles and features which in general give a good feel for the 'state of things' in the country.⁶⁴ Another useful analysis of the régime is provided by Camau⁶⁵ in Flory and Korany's *Les régimes politiques arabes*.⁶⁶ Much of the writing in the foreign newsmedia (and in particular in the French press) is seen by the Tunisian authorities as hostile⁶⁷, and it is true that the critical tone of much foreign commentary contrasts sharply with the consensual style of the Tunisian press.⁶⁸ The commentators in *Le Monde*, in particular, however, can be relied upon to provide succinct articles summarising the main trends at a given moment. In the mid-1990s, the image of Tunisia featuring in the French press was basically one of an increasingly prosperous society with something of a democracy deficit.⁶⁹

This recurrent theme is treated from the angle of the development of a large middle class - and the repression of any form of criticism of the régime. 'Tunisia consume and shut up', headlined *L'Express* in a 1997 feature article.⁷⁰ Much trumpeting of the

⁶³ Bras, Jean-Philippe (1996) 'Ben Ali et sa classe moyenne' in *Pôles*, April-June 1996, pp.174-195

⁶⁴ Articles tend to appear at times of State visits - for example, the President's state visit to Paris in October 1997 or Prime Minister Hamed Karoui's visit to Paris to inaugurate the *Saison tunisienne* in France in 1995.

⁶⁵ Camau, Michel (1991) 'Le Maghreb' in M. Flory and B. Korany (eds) 1990) *Les régimes politiques arabes* Paris: Presses universitaires de France, pp.369-450

⁶⁶ Flory, M. and Korany, B. (eds) 1990) *Les régimes politiques arabes* Paris: Presses universitaires de France

⁶⁷ The result is the 'selective censorship' of the French and international press - issues with hostile articles do not enter Tunisia. The Algerian and Moroccan press were not on sale as of late 1995. A number of commentators note the régime's hypersensitivity to any form of criticism.

⁶⁸ Certain French newspapers, in particular the widely respected daily *Libération*, allow Tunisian political exiles to express themselves. See for example *Libération* (23 March 1994) 'L'élection du roi de Tunisie' Mezri Haddad.

⁶⁹ On this see various articles in *Le Monde diplomatique*, for example *Le Monde diplomatique* (July 1993) 'La Tunisie, sans filet, dans le grand jeu du marché' Larbi Chouikha and Kamal Labidi; and *Le Monde diplomatique* (February 1997) 'Une presse asphyxiée, des journalistes harcelés' Hamed Ibrahim

⁷⁰ *L'Express* (16 October 1997) 'Tunisie consomme et tais-toi' Dominique Lagarde

expansion of the middle class is not a new theme, however, in post-independence Tunisia. With the abandoning of 1960s *étatisme* and the cooperative 'socialist' experiment, Tunisia moved towards a form of liberal clientelism, where the promotion of the middle classes was to be based on strong, State-lead economic expansion. In the words of J.-P. Bras:

... the representation of Tunisian society which took root in the official discourse was that of a 'median society' (*la société médiane*), [...], made of balance and temperance, where social pluralism would come in some way to compensate for the absence of political pluralism.⁷¹

The Tunisian model of the 1970s was severely tested in the 1980s when the régime's credibility was undermined by the application of IMF therapy: following the revision of the subsidy system for basic food products, major disturbances ensued, the 'bread riots' of January 1984. Increasingly seen as unable to ensure effective economic development, the government faced a growing Islamist party, the first of its kind in the Maghreb. The threat posed by this opposition to the party in power (the PSD) was ultimately to lead to the destitution of the increasingly senile President Habib Bourguiba, by his acting Prime Minister, Zine el Abidine Ben Ali, on 7 November 1987. In an interview in *Le Monde*, the new president

analysed the end of Bourguibism as a series of ruptures between the leader and his country, between State and society, leading to the paralysis of institutions and intermediate bodies, to a loss of confidence by citizens, leading to a feeling of 'shame' for the country.⁷²

The new president's watchword was change, *le Changement*, a new project for society was to be shaped, based upon respect for the rule of law, the reconciliation of State with civil society, and of society with its culture and history. These are the terms which recur constantly in the speeches of the Ben Ali years.

All political science and media commentators are in agreement in seeing major changes in Tunisian society over the last ten years. GNP has grown steadily (reaching a growth peak of 8 % in 1992), while population growth is falling (2.3 % per annum for the 1980s, now below 2 % per annum).⁷³ The number of students in education has

⁷¹ *ibid* (note 1) p.176

⁷² *ibid* (note 1) p.177

⁷³ For these figures see *ibid* (note 1) p.179-80

surged ahead, and state expenditure on education over the last six years has remained constant at between 5.7 % and 6.1 % of GNP. The educational system has been reinforced and modernised, with notably a revision of the images of the family and religion in school textbooks. In short, the educational system was reformed:

so as to ensure a balanced education which would root generations in their Arab-Islamic authenticity, taking into account progress and modernity and insuring the values of the republican régime and civil society.⁷⁴

The second major area of reform in the last decade has been administrative: to implement the policy of *infitah*⁷⁵, it was essential to provide an appropriate legal and institutional framework. This is not the place to go into the impact of the 1994 Investment Code, the effect of the privatisation of State-owned industry and the development of the financial markets (a good summary is provided by Bras in his 1996 article⁷⁶). There is no doubt that Tunisia has grown increasingly prosperous over the last ten years, and the local press continually quotes the economy's performance figures, as approved and applauded by the World Bank and the IMF. However, as a number of commentators have pointed out, the Tunisian economy is in many ways a fragile one: SMEs account for 94 % of companies, and 73 % of industrial employment, the important tourism sector is vulnerable to crises in the Middle East, while agricultural production must deal with a cycle of drought and wet years. Fortunately, however, 'a good tourist season can compensate for a bad agricultural year (1994), and vice versa (1991)'.⁷⁷

Tunisia has made great efforts to improve and restructure its productive apparatus. Society is experiencing rapid change. However, in any period of societal transformation, there are inevitably some who gain, and some who lose. (The next sub-section will include a look at some recent anti-poverty initiatives). But if there has been significant change in economic terms, political change would appear to lag behind, as foreign commentators have not been slow to point out. In this respect, Camau gives a short account of the period 1987-89.⁷⁸ Although the ruling party changed its name⁷⁹ in a symbolic break with the past, and attempted to attract a

⁷⁴ Quoted by Zakiya Daoud (1989) 'Chronique Tunisie' in *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord*

⁷⁵ *infitah*: lit. 'opening' (the country to foreign investment)

⁷⁶ *ibid* (note 1) pp.182-87

⁷⁷ *ibid* (note 1) p.190

wider spectrum of adherents, the weak political parties of the 'traditional opposition' were unable to gain any significant presence in public life. Although references to *l'Etat de droit* ('the State based upon the rule of law') and human rights⁸⁰ are now a central part of Tunisian political discourse, 'their effective implementation is the terrain and object of hidden struggles and debates'.⁸¹ Not the least of these was the marginalisation of any form of political Islam, with the régime being careful to demonstrate its attachment to Islamic values.

Writing in *Le Monde* in October 1997, Jean-Pierre Tuq⁸² begins a major feature article with a lengthy quotation on the situation in Tunisia three decades ago:

"One can see the rapid accentuation of the characteristics of a régime which refuses to give the opposition a legal means of expression. [...] The National Assembly, a simple emanation of the Party, limits itself to the role of a Chamber of Collective Acclamations. The vague desires of the opposition [...] which would like to be critical and constructive are rapidly reduced to silence [...]. Press and radio receive the mission of celebrating the grandeur of the régime and the renewal of the country." This picture of Bourguiba's Tunisia at the beginning of the 1960s as sketched out by the [French] academic Jean Ganiage in his monumental *Histoire contemporaine du Maghreb* (Fayard) is still up to date thirty years on.

In contrast to Bourguiba governments, however, the present Tunisian régime has remained unwavering in its economic options. If major reforms have been implemented, it is always with pragmatism. Tunisia cannot be realistically compared with Asian tiger economies - but it does have the highest per capita GNP of the Maghreb countries. The *classes médianes* dear to Bourguiba consider themselves well-served by the country's growing prosperity.⁸³ But as Bras⁸⁴ notes, the increased

⁷⁸ *ibid* (note 3) pp.439-442

⁷⁹ The *Parti socialiste destourien* became the *Rassemblement constitutionnel démocratique*. (The change is less dramatic in Arabic, as *destourien* is a synonym for 'constitutional').

⁸⁰ Since 10 December 1997, anniversary of the 1948 International Declaration of Human Rights, Tunisia has an Andalusian-style *Garden of Human Rights*, complete with phallic metal sculpture, situated outside the Hotel Abou Nawas, the leading business hotel.

⁸¹ *ibid* (note 3) p.440

⁸² *Le Monde* (18 October 1997) 'La Tunisie affiche santé économique et gros déficit démocratique' Jean-Pierre Tuq

liberalisation of the economy is not without its attendant risks, and may even threaten the great Tunisian consensus. By certain members of the business community, the administration is increasingly seen as an obstacle to free competition and the growth of trade, while others fear the oft-quoted figure that 60 % of Tunisian SMEs will go under as the economy opens up. (The government aim was the creation of a free-exchange area with the European Union by the year 2008, for everything except agricultural products.)

Thus the protectionists fear *infitah*, while the liberals demand an in-depth overhaul of the administrative and banking sector. These are, of course, debates which do not find their way into the mainstream press - and are only expressed in a muted form in specialised local business publications. Since the early 1990s, the régime has been able to exchange stability and growth for support, economic development being seen as the *sine qua non* of the rise of 'civil society'. The régime's thinkers, the creators of its public discourse, would seem to be writing on the basis that a real democratic system can evolve from a prosperous, entrepreneurial society structured by a network of associations. However, as Bras notes:

In immediate terms, the growth pact leads to a depoliticisation of Tunisian society: the man in the street (sic) is *khobziste*⁸⁵ (daily bread first), while the middle classes are keen to protect their consumption, development and public order. In exchange, the latter support the régime, accepting the methods - and the cost, in terms of democracy - of repressing the Islamists.⁸⁶

This may seem a somewhat summary judgement of Tunisian society in the 1990s. Nevertheless, it contains more than just a grain of truth. For the moment, the top-down modernisation of Tunisia is seen by most commentators as being based upon a severe separation of the political and economic processes. (It would be more correct to say the perceived separation of the political and economic processes.) For the moment, the authoritarian modernisation model is credible thanks to strong economic

⁸³ A journalist might refer to the feeling prevailing in Tunisia in the early 1990s as the 'Ben Ali feel-good factor'. Companies have benefited from a range of measures, including special government funding and grants for the *mise-à-niveau* (upgrading) of Tunisian industry; individuals and families have benefited from the increased availability of housing loans, consumer credit and the famous *voitures économiques* (people's cars), referred to as the *karhabat Zine*, the President's cars.

⁸⁴ *ibid* (note 1) pp.194-95

⁸⁵ *khobziste*. Term derived from the Arabic *khubz*, bread. Cereal products (flour, bread, pasta) are heavily subsidised in Tunisia.

⁸⁶ *ibid* (note 1) p.188

expansion. Who takes the blame should this model falter remains a matter of speculation. The double social project of promoting the middle classes - often presented as a Tunisian national characteristic in comparison with the rest of the Arab world - accompanied by the protection of the poorest in society to compensate for the democracy deficit may come to seem insufficient, as the cases of a number of northern Mediterranean countries have shown.

For the moment, as Tunisia moves towards the consumer paradise observable on European and Arabian Gulf television, the State continues to be the key actor defining the economic and development orientations of Tunisian society - a position which it does not seem about to relinquish, despite its limitations. Moving next to the focus area of the present dissertation, an area of housing policy, the next sub-section provides a short overview of how this State apparatus has come to intervene in housing provision for low-income groups. A complex subject, this account inevitably necessitates a look at the wider Tunisian urban planning context along with a brief look at recent anti-poverty initiatives.

4.3 The policy context: model housing projects, urban policy and anti-poverty initiatives

France comes with its administration and its laws, its schools, dispensaries and hospitals, its ports, its roads and its railway lines, its public works and its security. She can give more, and it is Order in the city, the order which generates wealth for the community and happiness for the family, the order which ensures the harmonious development of town and village, which lays down the steps, avoids waste, eliminates the loss of time.⁸⁷

It is not easy to trace the flow of policy initiatives, urban land-use plans and institutional developments which have accompanied the massive expansion of Tunisia's population over the last fifty years. Going further back, ultimately the most striking thing is the huge transformation which has taken place in the last one hundred years. From being a land dominated by rural tribes and communities living in semi-autarchy, Tunisia has become the most heavily urbanised of the Maghreb states, with a population concentrated in coastal conurbations, of which Tunis, the capital, is by far the most important with 1,828,842 inhabitants, 20.8% of the national population.⁸⁸ In 1881, the year Tunisia became a French protectorate, the nomad and rural populations were much larger than urban populations; in 1981, nomad pastoralism as a way of life had practically disappeared, tribalism had given way to a diversity of family and individual strategies in the context of a nation state increasingly integrated into the world economic order.

The present section attempts to locate the Oukala Project, object of the present dissertation, in the wider context of housing and land-use policy and anti-poverty initiatives. Although these two policy strands are closely linked, the present discussion focuses more on the physical, housing side of the State's attempts to evaluate and satisfy the demands of low-income groups. I attempt an overview of five main themes: the first model social housing projects, the *cités musulmanes* of the post-World War II reconstruction period (1943-48); housing in post-independence Tunisia (post-1956), focusing on the spread of self-built areas; the government institutional response to urbanisation; a look at recent anti-poverty initiatives; and, in conclusion, I return to model housing projects for low-income groups, one of which is

⁸⁷ Petit, Eugène-Claudius (1948) 'La tâche sacrée de la reconstruction' leader article in *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, n°20, October 1948

⁸⁸ figure from the 1994 census quoted in Chabbi, Morched (1995) 'Population et urbanisation en Tunisie: mutations et enjeux' in *Lectures stratégiques - Consultation nationale, Tunisie, 21ème siècle*, p.144 Tunis: Institut tunisien d'études stratégiques, pp.143-156

the Oukala Project. In the discussion of the vast expansion of *habitat anarchique* or *quartiers spontanés*, to use the technical jargon, I make use of material by the Tunisian urban planner Morched Chabbi, practically the only practitioner and academic to have written on the subject.⁸⁹ For the other areas, I draw on some of the available institutional and professional literature, including the 1996 Tunisian national report for the Habitat II conference held in Istanbul.⁹⁰

Model social housing projects?: Tunisia's "cités musulmanes", 1943-48

In 1943, after the passage of Axis and Allied armies, (and the defeat of the former), the French authorities found themselves faced with the task of replacing the large amount of infrastructure which had been destroyed. They also found themselves faced with more than just mumblings of nationalist discontent. France was clearly not an invincible protector, and the maintenance of the French presence clearly required that the needs of the Muslim masses be taken into account - especially given the rise of a vociferous nationalist movement. As the minister for Reconstruction and Urbanism wrote in a foreword to a special number of *Architecture d'aujourd'hui* in 1948 celebrating the architectural achievements of the Tunisian government:

It is a good thing to push back epidemics, to save children, but what good is there in extending good health if the leprosy of slums and 'bidonvilles' continues to spread and is alone in taking in those whom death did not take, if cities are ignorant of the most basic hygiene.⁹¹

There was a clear faith in the power of technical experts to get things done, and a team of experienced architects, some of whom had acquired first hand knowledge of traditional building methods through working with master builders in Morocco, was brought in. Improved infrastructure, schools and hospitals and social housing for the Muslim community were the order of the day, and a series of small planned estates were built. The Moroccan experience was all the more relevant, given the shortage of

⁸⁹ See for example Chabbi, Morched (1997) 'Evolution du Grand Tunis, territorialités et centralité' in Mohamed Naciri and André Raymond (eds) *Sciences sociales et phénomènes urbains dans le monde arabe*, pp.257-270

⁹⁰ République tunisienne, Ministère de l'Équipement et de l'Habitat (1996) *Rapport national pour la deuxième conférence des Nations unies sur les établissements humains (Habitat II, Istanbul, juin 1996)* 83 pages

⁹¹ Petit, Eugène-Claudius (1948) 'La tâche sacrée de la reconstruction' leader article in *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, n°20, October 1948

materials: prefabricated housing was out of the question, given the total lack of cement, steel and wood in the post-war years. A training centre specialised in traditional building methods was set up in the Médina of Tunis, and research was undertaken into materials and vaulting techniques. In short, the watchwords were the development of local building techniques - and a respect for local lifestyles. In a description of the Cité musulmane at El Omrane, Tunis, (today known as *houmat as-siti*!) one can read:

The houses have 1, 2 or 3 rooms, plus kitchen and water closet (*les dépendances*), and are ground floor only, each with a private courtyard which provides light for the rooms. These are thus protected from any prying gaze so the Muslim woman can thus go about her home freely, without being seen either by neighbours or passers-by.⁹²

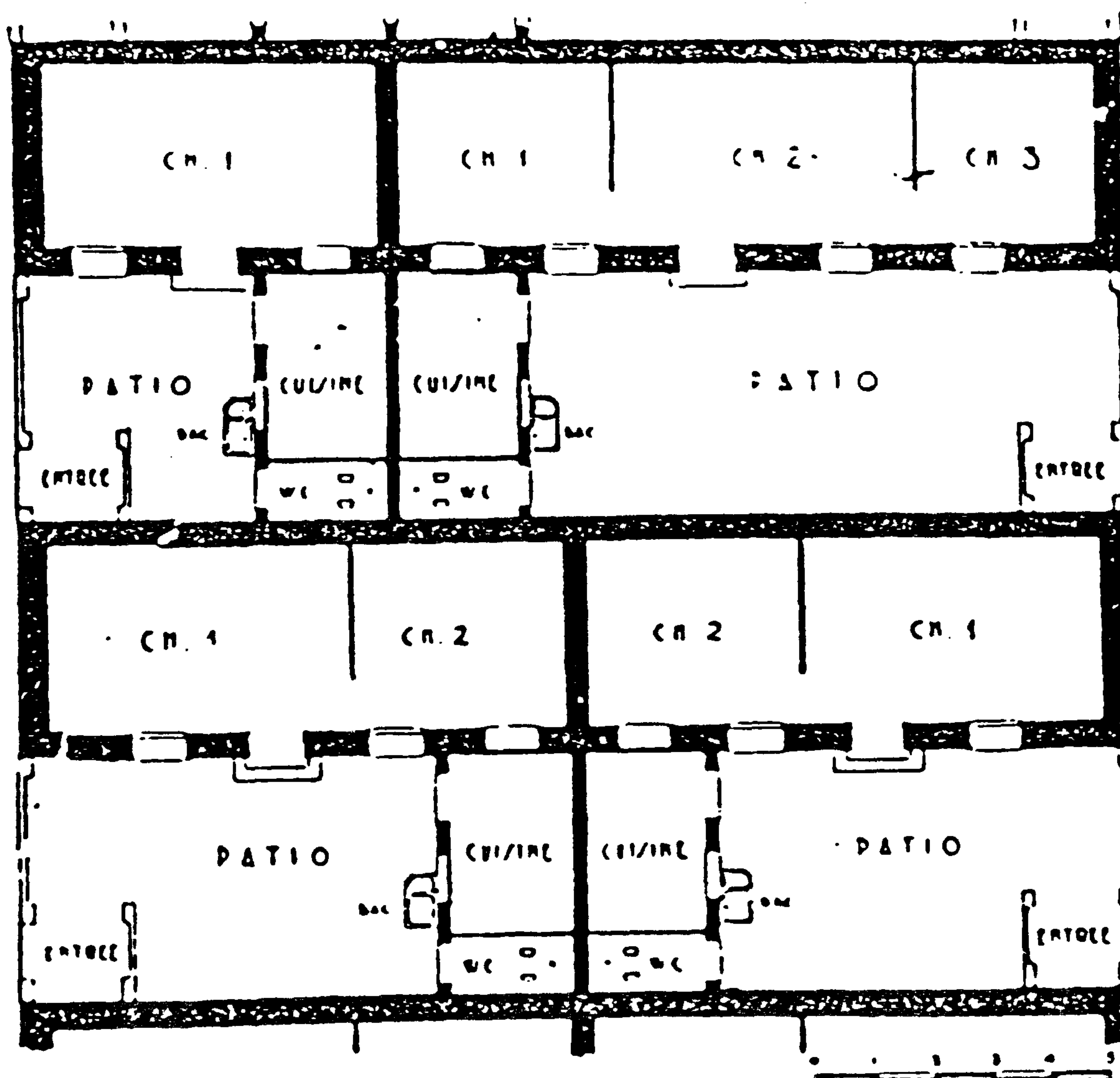
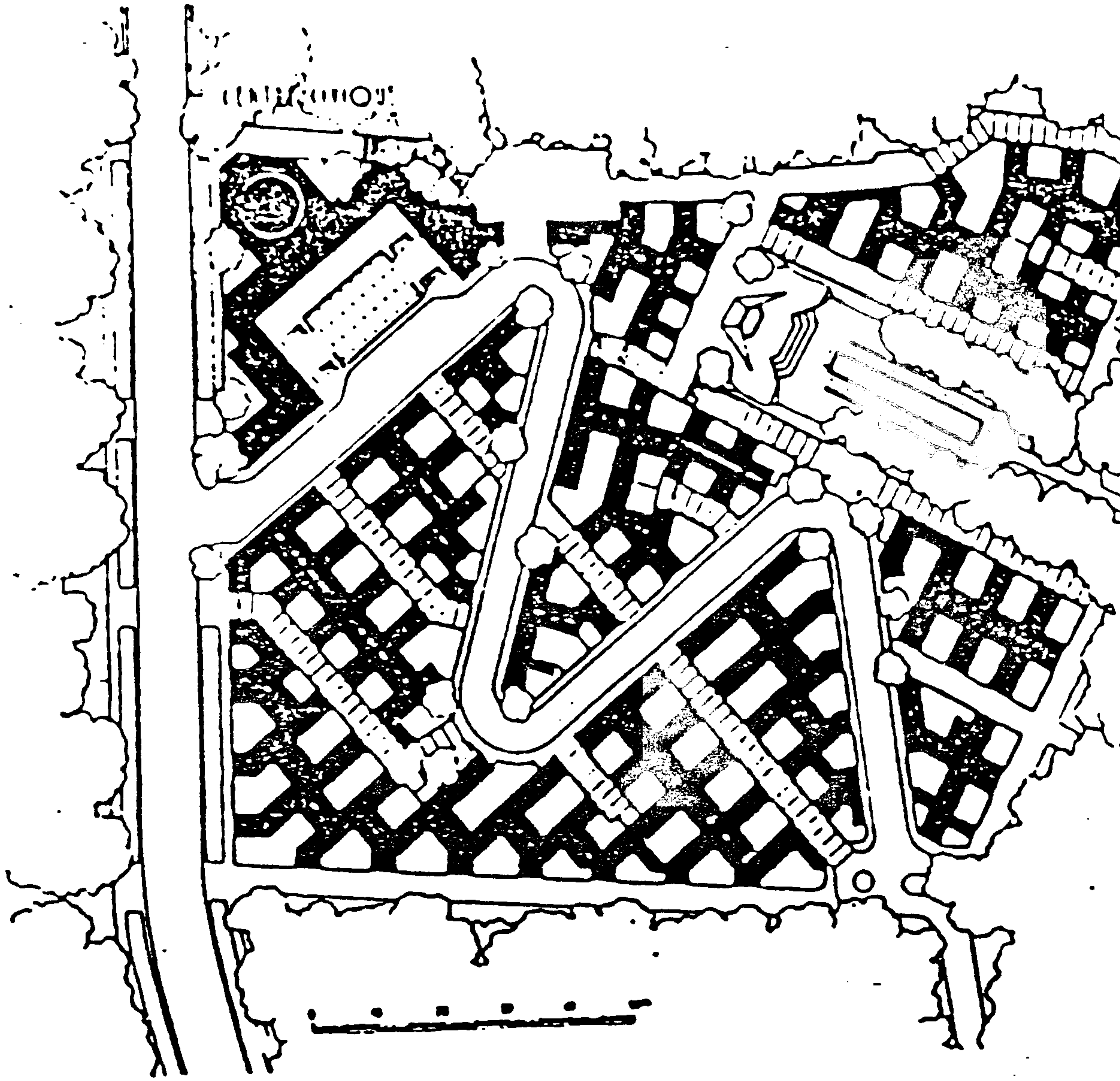


Figure 1: (Above) Plan of a house at the Cité Musulmane at El Omrane. Each house includes four different sized dwelling units. Note the privacy offered by the access hall or *skifa*. (Source: anon (1948) 'La Cité musulmane, El Omrane' in *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, n°20, October 1948)

⁹² anon (1948) 'La Cité musulmane, El Omrane' in *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, n°20, October 1948

*Figure 2: (Below) Plan of the Cité Musulmane at El Omrane. The road curves down the slope of the hillside creating a dense residential neighbourhood. (Source: anon (1948) 'La Cité musulmane, El Omrane' in *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, n°20, October 1948)*



PLAN DE GROUPEMENT DES MAISONS DE LA CITE

According to those writing in the 1948 Tunisia number of *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, (admittedly somewhat propagandist in tone), the new housing projects were undertaken with careful attention to the needs of the population:

Those responsible would study the questions with the authorities in the *bled*, would discuss matters with those concerned, would build, install, and then head off for other sites. Their stay would provide work by other means than the welfare building sites. They would leave behind them hygiene and comfort, thus continuing the work of France in Tunisia.⁹³

It was with this paternalist approach that the French no doubt saw themselves as winning the support of the Muslim populations in Tunisia. The *maison minima* ('... in all countries, at the forefront of the preoccupations of the reconstruction and housing departments')⁹⁴, based on the smallest unit of the courtyard houses of the Tunisian countryside, was the basis for new estates at Sousse, Tebourba and Bizerte, as well as for small groupings of rural housing across the country. Vaults and other traditional methods were also used for schools, clinics and markets. However, the experiment was abandoned. As Paul Herbé noted in his summary of the achievements of 1943-48:

Unfortunately a slow and hidebound administration was incapable of keeping up with the architects' élan, as no legislation followed to support and reinforce their concepts. This total abandoning of the great policy of Urbanism and Architecture, at the very moment it should have borne fruit, was all the more regrettable because it left the field open to lazy solutions, favouring the growing hold of private interests over the general interest, the hold of mediocre solutions, and the victory of bad taste.⁹⁵

Through a combination of political factors, the experiments of Zehrfuss and his team in social housing were abandoned. The minister for Reconstruction may have had faith in 'the often disinterested efforts of well-tried technical experts'⁹⁶ - others did

⁹³ Rolland, Maxime (1948) 'La maison minima tunisienne. B.H. Zehrfuss, et J. Kyriacopoulos, architectes' in *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, n°20, October 1948, p.77

⁹⁴ *ibid* (note 7) p.77

⁹⁵ Herbé, Paul (1948) 'Bilan' in *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, n°20, October 1948

⁹⁶ Petit, Eugène-Claudius (1948) 'La tâche sacrée de la reconstruction' leader article in *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, n°20, October 1948

not. Nevertheless, the estates and civil buildings created in that short post-war period were later to be widely studied at the ITTAUT, Tunisia's architecture and planning school.⁹⁷

Self-build and social segregation: housing in independent Tunisia

Writing in 1951, five years before independence, the sociologist Paul Sebag was to brush an unflattering portrait of the housing situation in Tunisia's cities:

Workers' housing in the cities comprises the overpopulated slums of the médinas. As for the labour which has poured into Tunis in recent years, it crowds into the *gourbis* or houses built of sun-dried clay grouped in various *douars* (villages) which form a belt around the capital.⁹⁸

Thus as Miossec notes, at the time of independence, Tunisia faced a housing crisis in terms of both quantity and quality.⁹⁹ With the departure of the European and Tunisian Jewish populations, a large stock of high quality housing was available - along with agricultural lands. This absorbed some of the demand. Rural migrants continued to crowd into the peripheral *gourbivilles*¹⁰⁰ - the reaction of the State was to demolish.¹⁰¹ In the case of Tunis, the result was to increase pressure on the already overcrowded Médina, which in the 1960s was also a target for demolition by modernist architect-planners and a President of the Republic keen to leave his mark on the capital.

A first wave of demolitions at Sidi Béchir in the Médina raised widespread opposition, however, and the municipal authorities and the Presidency, ever pragmatic, were to abandon the demolition of the *gourbivilles* in 1968. Newly independent Tunisia's high demand for housing was to be satisfied, although not according to the rational schemes of the science of urbanism.

⁹⁷ Marc Breitman who lectured at the ITTAUT in the early 1980s was later to write extensively on the architecture of 'the Reconstruction'. See Breitman, Marc (1986) *Rationalisme Tradition - Tunisie 1943-1947* followed by *Le cas Jacques Marmey* Brussels and Liège: Pierre Mardaga, éditeur

⁹⁸ Sebag, Paul (1951) *La Tunisie, essai de monographie* Paris: Editions sociales, quoted in J.-M. Miossec (1988) 'La politique d'habitat en Tunisie depuis l'indépendance', p.18 in Pierre-Robert Baduel (ed) (1988) *Habitat - Etat - Société au Maghreb* Paris: Cnrs, pp.17-36

⁹⁹ J.-M. Miossec (1988) 'La politique d'habitat en Tunisie depuis l'indépendance', p.18 in Pierre-Robert Baduel (ed) (1988) *Habitat - Etat - Société au Maghreb* Paris: Cnrs, pp.17-36

¹⁰⁰ See Sebag, Paul (1959) 'Le bidonville de Borgel' in *Cahiers de Tunisie*, pp.267-309

¹⁰¹ Between 1957 and 1969 five *gourbivilles* were demolished.

Essentially demand was satisfied in two ways: salaried groups were able to acquire homes built by a range of State bodies, while unsalaried groups, for whom the so-called low-cost housing schemes proved to expensive, were to opt for self-build en masse.

Salaried groups were able to benefit from land developed by the AFH (Agence foncière de l'habitat), a State land development agency created in 1974. Prepared land was acquired cheaply by professional groups and private developers, notably in the areas to the north of the prestigious colonial suburbs of Mutuelleville and Crémieuxville. By the mid-1980s the two new residential quarters of El Menzah and El Manar had become symbols of social success. The 1994 census gives a population of 80,000 for the two areas.¹⁰²

As the Médina became increasingly crowded, despite the departure of the bourgeois families and the Italian and Tunisian Jewish communities, unsalaried groups began to exploit a loophole in the system. The abolition of the *habous* land tenure system in the late 1950s, and the departure of the *colons*, the foreign farming community, meant that there was a large amount of unregistered and poorly monitored agricultural land around Tunis (and other cities). Pirate sub-developers were to seize the opportunity, and began to sell off this unregistered State land (*terres domaniales*) to private individuals who were not slow to build.¹⁰³ This process of pirate sub-development, coupled with the building of new estates by the SNIT, the national property company, supposedly to rehouse the gorbiville populations, began the rapid expansion of the city of Tunis into the surrounding fertile agricultural land.

Chabbi summarises the reasons behind the rise of this illegal sub-development of housing land thus:

The new peripheral (residential) areas arose from the combination of savings which had been unable to find investment opportunities and a market offering small parcels of building land (150 m² on average).¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² figure quoted in *ibid* (note 3) p.263

¹⁰³ The question is most thoroughly explored in Chabbi, Morched (1986) *Une nouvelle forme d'urbanisation dans le Grand Tunis : l'habitat spontané péri-urbain* doctoral thesis in urban planning Paris: Val-de-Marne

¹⁰⁴ see *ibid* (note 3) p.259

The Ministry of Public Works and Housing (1996), looking back to the 1970s, adds in another factor: the slow and complex official procedures for the development of new housing land and the partial implementation of urban land use plans.¹⁰⁵ It was also true that construction of low-income housing by the State had collapsed by 1967: the IMF considered social expenditure unproductive; whereas the cumulative target for the period 1962-1971 was 155,000 units, only 37,700 were constructed, 35 % of the total.¹⁰⁶ Fortunately, low-income groups managed to accomodate themselves, although in a cities increasingly segregated along socio-economic lines. At the end of the 1970s, the State apparatus woke up to the fact that it had large (and growing) unserviced housing areas on the edges of major cities, referred to as 'spontaneous' or 'anarchic' neighbourhoods by the technical professions.

Tunisia's spreading cities: the institutional response to rapid urbanisation

In 1981, the Tunisian government set up a specialised body, the Agence de rénovation et de réhabilitation urbaine (ARRU), to deal with the need for low-cost building land and to renovate unfit or self-built areas (the phrase used in the 1996 Public Works Ministry report is 'la rénovation de quartiers vétustes et / ou anarchiques'.¹⁰⁷ In the course of the Third Urban Project, nine 'anarchic quarters' were rehabilitated, the number rising to 25 for the Fourth Urban Project. The French term *réhabilitation* is used in this context to mean the upgrading of a residential area in the broadest sense of the term, including basic service provision and demolition / rebuild where justified by the technical constraints of installing infrastructure. Under the aegis of the ARRU, a national programme for the upgrading of 'popular quarters' was launched for the eighth five year national development plan (1992-1996). A 1991 survey had revealed that the needs were considerable, nothing less than 146,000 units in 420 areas were deemed to be in need of *réhabilitation*, i.e. 14 % of total housing stock. The first phase of this PNRQP¹⁰⁸ was to cover 223 quarters.

In addition, the AFH, Housing Land Agency has moved in to land preparation for self-build by low income groups, creating plots of between 100 and 140 m² in site and

¹⁰⁵ see *ibid* (note 4) p.19

¹⁰⁶ DAT / Groupe Huit (1972) *Villes et développement* Tunis: Ministère de l'Economie, p.297 quoted in Chabbi, M. (1988) 'Politiques d'habitat et modèles de développement: le cas de Tunis, 1960-1984' in Pierre-Robert Baduel (ed) (1988) *Habitat - Etat - Société au Maghreb* Paris: Cnrs, pp.37-50

¹⁰⁷ *ibid* (note 4) p.17

¹⁰⁸ Programme national pour la réhabilitation des quartiers populaires

service developments (*trames assainies*). Cost of this low-income land preparation was subsidised by land developed for upper income groups, and between 1986 and 1996 some 16,150 plots were made available.¹⁰⁹

Low-income groups are also increasingly targeted by State bodies involved in housing loans. The Fonds national pour l'amélioration de l'habitat (FNAH), the national housing improvement fund, as of 1989 became interested in the upgrading of *quartiers populaires*, making loans available to people in these areas. The Banque de l'Habitat, Tunisia's main housing bank, also launched loans for those building in site and service area, as well as managing the loan programme of the PNRLR¹¹⁰, a national programme aimed at upgrading the most rudimentary forms of housing. Although concerned mainly with rural housing (85 %), this programme also intervened in urban areas, building a total of 94,000 units between 1986 and 1995 (rural and urban areas combined).

On the basis of this necessarily rather rapid overview, it is clear that since the start of the 1980s, Tunisian housing policy has moved towards taking the efforts of the informal sector into account (evaluated at 23 % of the total in the VIth Plan, 1982-86).¹¹¹ The State has made considerable efforts in providing infrastructure, and has moved towards making housing finance available for low income groups.

Nevertheless, as the 1996 Public Works Ministry report notes:

the housing sector is still experiencing certain sectoral difficulties, notably the restricted supply of housing for low income social categories in Greater Tunis and the large towns: the difficulty of finding sufficient building land and the high cost of building have not allowed all housing demand to be satisfied and have contributed to maintaining the phenomenon of anarchic housing.¹¹²

Fighting urban poverty: more State initiatives

¹⁰⁹ *ibid* (note 4) p.19

¹¹⁰ Programme national pour la résorption du logement rudimentaire.

¹¹¹ *ibid* (note 13) p.22

¹¹² *ibid* (note 4) p.29

Tunisia is proud of its status as the only Arab state, with the possible exception of Lebanon, with a large and educated middle class. The government has set itself the objective of attaching itself to the European Union by 2008 through the establishment of a free trade zone '(excluding agricultural products). This politique d'ouverture is not without risks for the Tunisian economy, composed as it is of small, family run businesses, and the most pessimistic analysts predict the disappearance of a third of local businesses and a sharp rise in unemployment - and popular discontent, with the attendant risks of renewed support for a fundamentalist opposition. To maintain its position in a context growing consumerism, the régime has undertaken a number of anti-poverty initiatives, of which the most widely covered in the media is the 26-26 National Solidarity Fund.¹¹³

Created in 1992, the FNS and its activities are known to everyone in Tunisia. Each year, on 8 December, FNS Day, the population can - and is invited - to make a contribution to the fund, as are private businesses, which are said to contribute at a rate of 24 dinars per employee per annum. In principle, contributions are voluntary; the rumour runs, however, that companies which fail to contribute run the risk of 'problems' of various kinds.

The State would seem to be the main source of finance, supplying over two-thirds of the total, individual and company donations making up the rest. Between 1993 and 1995, the Fund collected 130 million dinars, of which 40 million was from private sources.¹¹⁴

On paper, at least, the activities of the FNS sound impressive:

It is forecast that the Fund's interventions will reach, between 1993 and 2000, around 1,106 *zones d'ombre*, with 176,500 families, i.e. almost one million people.¹¹⁵

In reality, the sums of money mobilised by the FNS are very small. Between 1993 and 1995, the Fund made grants to the value of 120,500,000 dinars. Projects financed include the provision of drinking water, roads and electricity for isolated settlements,

¹¹³ Referred to by its French acronym, FNS, or as the vingt-six vingt-six, the Fund's post office account number.

¹¹⁴ *ibid* (note 4) p.23

¹¹⁵ *ibid* (note 4) p.23

the construction of basic housing for poor and generally remote communities. How the FNS' activities are co-ordinated with the programmes of other ministries is not very clear. On the whole, however, the activities of the Fund are seen as positive, and the Tunisian newsmedia regularly refers to the interest taken in the workings of the 26-26 in other African countries.

The FNS is criticised in private for its general lack of accountability. According to the legal status of the Fund, it is the Head of State's prerogative to choose the projects to be implemented by the Fund, and neither the government nor the National Assembly has any formal say in the allocation of resources. Given these conditions, the FNS all too easily seems like a propaganda instrument in the hands of the Presidency. Thanks to the 26-26, Carthage is able to intervene and resolve a wide range of problems, and presidential popularity benefits immensely. As Jean-Pierre Tuq put it, writing in *Le Monde*:

At El Faou, an hour from the capital, on 7 November (1997), some twenty families are going to leave behind the overcrowded huts in which they had been living, for new concrete houses. The investment is covered by the Fund and the families will have nothing to pay. Who is to be thanked? 'President Ben Ali', say the people, applauding their benefactor.¹¹⁶

More closely tied to the long term projects of the Tunisian administration are the integrated development programmes. The PDUI (Programme de développement urbain intégré), was created as part of the VIIIth Five Year Development Plan. With a budget of 90,000,000 dinars, the aim of its first thirty projects was to promote productive activities and improve infrastructure, in 'the *grandes cités populaires* (understand: the large self-built housing areas), which suffer more than others from poverty, unemployment and low-living standards'.¹¹⁷ In the words of the 1996 Ministry of Public Works report:

These projects aim to consolidate national solidarity to the benefit of these quarters and to help their populations to become integrated with the surrounding urban environment and with the economic circuit.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Le Tuq, Jean-Pierre (1997) 'Le "26-26" ou l'épargne forcée au profit du développement' in *Le Monde*, 18/10/97

¹¹⁷ *ibid* (note 4) p.36

¹¹⁸ *ibid* (note 4) p.36

The Tunisian government also runs a number of social programmes 'to reduce pockets of poverty and improve the living conditions of the poorest populations.'¹¹⁹ There are two basic lines of approach here: direct assistance, both permanent and temporary, in the form of food and money (the latter is managed by the PNAFN, the national assistance programme for needy families, established in 1986); and secondly, support programmes, of much wider scope, which include free health care, free education and training, legal assistance. Basic food products, in particular flour and sugar, are subsidised by the Caisse nationale de compensation.

Tunisia has seen a clear reduction in poverty over the last three decades. Official figures give 33 % of the population as living below the poverty line in 1967, as against 12.9 % in 1980 and 6.7 % in 1990.¹²⁰ Tunisian national statistics institute (INS) figures reveal that the phenomenon is especially concentrated in the North West, where it touches 10 % of the population, as compared with the urbanised coastal areas (5 %). According to the INS, for the period 1985-1990, some 550,000 people, around 8 % of the population, were living below the poverty line - hence the importance of highly visible anti-poverty initiatives of various kinds.

Housing low-income groups in the 1990s: recent model projects

As discussed above, the early public housing projects in post-war Tunisia were guided by the rhetoric of the civilising mission of France. With the commitment of experienced architects with a deep interest in traditional building techniques, a series of small housing estates for low-income groups were realised, models of progress for the time. Fifty years on, exemplary housing projects remain a staple part of Tunisian government rhetoric. Although there is much talk of preserving the Arab-Muslim heritage, the interest in traditional building techniques has largely been abandoned in favour of modern concrete frame and slab technology. Building fashions and the ready availability of cement and bricks have ensured the death of traditional technologies on any significant scale. Ultimately, it is the conditions of deprived population's access to urban residential space which have shaped Tunisia's expanding cities far more than the ideal environments created on the architects' drawing boards.

The redevelopment of the 13 ha Hafsia site in the old city or Médina of Tunis since the mid-1970s has won two Agha Khan architecture awards (1983 and 1995). The

¹¹⁹ *ibid* (note 4) p.38

¹²⁰ INS figures are extensively quoted in the Ministry of Public Works report, *ibid* (note 4) p.38

1996 Ministry of Public Works and Housing report features, in addition to a FNS rural development project with a housing component, three model housing projects: the model village of Sidi Khalifa, the Hafsia, and the Oukala Project. The first project, with its emphasis on local building techniques, is very much in the tradition of the late 1940s projects - with in addition and emphasis on consultation and cooperation with the populations concerned through the NGO Kène. The latter two projects, both in the Médina of Tunis, were also implemented in part by an NGO, the Association Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis.¹²¹ At the time of writing (late 1997), the Oukala Project seemed set to follow in the footsteps of the Hafsia Project, (in terms of international recognition), having been put forward as a candidate for an Agha Khan prize for its handling of the multi-occupancy housing situation in the older parts of central Tunis. The outline story of this meeting between people stuck in unfit housing and the State is recounted in the next section, 'Symbol of a caring State: outline of the Oukala Project'. The mechanics of the representations circulating of this project are the stuff of chapters 5 and 6.

4.4 Symbol of a caring State?: a general presentation of the Oukala Project

The issue of human development, affirmed President Ben Ali, with all the aspects that it includes, has benefited in Tunisia from all the interest it merits, and this since the Change of 7 November 1987... Also, we have focused our political choices and our development programmes on training people, improving their way of life, and conditions of existence. We considered housing to be a fundamental factor for the stability of the individual and the guarantee of their social and psychological balance.

from an editorial in *Réalités* news magazine, 21 / 27 June 1996, quoting the presidential address to the Habitat II conference, Istanbul, 1995

From its beginnings in late 1990 to late 1996, the Oukala Project, an operation to tackle multi-occupancy housing in old Tunis featured regularly in the Tunisian national press, sometimes in the form of brief news pieces based on official press releases or planning documents, occasionally in the form of major articles accompanied by editorials detailing project progress. Before embarking on an

¹²¹ Although nominally an independent organisation concerned with heritage issues, the Association Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis is in fact independent in name only. Since the early 1980s the ASM de Tunis has functioned essentially as an integrated architectural design office subsidised for the Municipality of Tunis. A contracting unit undertakes restoration and building work in historic areas. The French term *association*, under French law, implies an organisation with specific legal statues: an *association* has civil status and is non-profit making.

examination of texts related to this issue, I will attempt to give an account of the key developments of the *oukala* issue.

One key background question is why the why sub-standard housing conditions in the Médina came to the fore on the government agenda in late 1990. I will treat this issue first, before giving a broad overview of the project since implementation began in 1991. After this presentation of the institutional and financial arrangements, I will look very briefly, in historic terms, at how the way the *oukala* issue is framed has changed since it was first identified in the early 1970s, setting it in the context of other national and local State initiatives in the Médina. I conclude with a brief evaluation of the project so far; a concluding table presents the key dates in the implementation of this highly mediatised example of intervention by the Tunisian State.

The issue of sub-standard, multi-occupancy housing in the Médina has been a concern of architect-planners working on urban conservation issues for some thirty years, and has been a local government concern since at least inter-war period. Unsalubrious housing in the *hara* or Jewish quarter (today's Hafsia), had been identified as a local policy issue as far back as 1918, and in 1929 the Municipality included the problem of urban decay in this area in its 'Projet d'aménagement de Tunis et de sa zone d'extension'. The outline project for the improvement of the neighbourhood was approved by the Municipal Council in June 1931, to be integrated into the city plan: demolition / rebuild was the way forward, and later plans in the 1950s were to follow the same approach. In the event, much was demolished, and little rebuilt. The issue was also seen essentially as an ethnic one: the poorest Jewish families were rehoused in low-rise apartment blocks, the *immeubles du Dr Cassar*, very similar to those in which successful Tunisian Jewish families were living in the 1930s quarter of Lafayette. Rebuilding traditional courtyard houses (in keeping with the Médina's fabric) for the most underprivileged families was not an option considered.¹²² In the Sixties, the demolition of the *gourbivilles* and the accelerating rural exodus no doubt worsened the overcrowding in multi-occupancy housing in the Médina. An examination of the archives at the Association Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis

¹²² On crowded housing conditions in the *hara* of Tunis, see Albert Memmi's (1953) *La Statue de sel* Paris: Buchet-Chastel. In first part of this autobiographical novel, the hero recounts his childhood in the homes and alleys of the Médina in the years before World War II. Roger Martin du Gard's 1931 novel *La Confiance africaine*, Paris: Gallimard, evokes Italian / Jewish life in the same quarter in the inter-war period.

(ASM) produced a series of short reports and housing upgrading studies¹²³, identifying the problem and proposing solutions. Initially, the focus was on municipally owned housing in the Médina¹²⁴, but other issues in the Médina were to attract the attention of planners and politicians.

The multi-occupancy housing question came to the fore once more in 1985 when the ARRU¹²⁵, in collaboration with the ASM, undertook a survey of the oukalas. The seriousness of the problem was revealed: in the multi-occupancy dwellings, more than 90 % of households were tenants, with an average of three people per room in the central Médina. However, not all was negative: 75 % of property could still be upgraded, with only 20 % needing demolition and 5 % suitable for conversion to other uses.

The 1990 launch of the Oukala Project: possible motives

¹²³ Agence de réhabilitation et de renovation urbaine / Municipalité de Tunis (1987) *Oukalas: programme opérationnel*, septembre 1987

Agence de réhabilitation et de renovation urbaine (1990) *Oukalas à enquêter dans la Médina centrale*, décembre 1990

Association Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis / Projet Tunis-Carthage (1973) *Projet de refection et d'assainissement des immeubles collectifs municipaux en Médina*

Association Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis / Mohamed El Bahi (1977) 'La Médina de Tunis : mise en valeur et réhabilitation' presentation given at the 1976 seminar *Villes historiques, sauvegarde et réhabilitation* pp.15

Association Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis (1981) *Réhabilitation et rénovation* proceedings of the second workshop at the Regional conference on housing, February 1981, pp.25

Association Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis (1987) *Habitat insalubre "Les Oukalas" dans la Médina de Tunis*

Association Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis (1990) *L'amélioration de l'habitat insalubre dans les médinas : resorption des oukalas* (document élaboré par S. Yaïche, D. Lesage et J. Abdelkafi) pp.9

Ministère de l'Equipeement et de l'Habitat (1990) *L'habitat collectif - les oukalas : note de synthèse*, octobre 1990, pp.9

¹²⁴ Association Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis / Projet Tunis-Carthage (1973) *Projet de refection et d'assainissement des immeubles collectifs municipaux en Médina*

¹²⁵ Agence de renovation et de réhabilitation urbaine

Interviews with a number of planner architects and other professionals involved in the Oukala Project tended to produce broadly similar explanations as to why the multioccupancy housing issue 'hit the headlines' as a major government initiative in late 1990. Said one architect: 'I think it's well known why the Project started; it was after the President's visit to an oukala.' Another informant gave a much more nuanced view:

We knew something was going to happen (in October 1990, preparing a special dossier for the Mayor, to be taken to the Presidency... it's always like that, the President doesn't take any decisions without a dossier, and then you have all the cinema of the *visite inopinée* (the surprise visit)... so four million dinars was released for the first phase of the project.

So despite numerous discussions on the oukala issue, I was not really able to get at just why late 1990 was the launch date for the initiative. Perhaps the question needs to be considered in the light of other media stories running at the time. A look through back numbers of the Tunisian weekly newsmagazine *Réalités* for the latter months of 1990 reveals frequent articles concerned with the situation in Irak, and interviews with Algerian fundamentalist leader Abbassi Madani and Abdelfattah Mourou, one of the Tunisian Islamic party leaders. (Direct interviews with such politicians are unthinkable in the press of mid-1990s Tunisia).

To continue along this political line, the management of the initiative was apparently the object of a struggle between the Mayor of Tunis, then recently elected, and the then Minister of Public Works and Housing. In terms of establishing a stronger political profile for the Municipality, the successful execution of the slum rehousing scheme would undoubtedly bring dividends. As one senior Tunisian private sector cadre put it: 'Of course it's important... it allows the Mayor to meet the President of the Republic three or four times a year and build up his political profile'.

The underlying reasons for the high-profile launch of the scheme may therefore remain the object of some speculation. Nevertheless, in a context where the Islamic leaders were still gaining media coverage, it was probably imperative for the government to be seen to be taking measures to improve the lot of the poorest members of society. The situation in neighbouring Algeria was still such that the FIS¹²⁶ might yet have gained the upper hand.

¹²⁶ Front islamique du salut (Islamic Salvation Front), winners of the Algerian elections in 1988 over the ruling FLN, Front de la libération nationale.

The Oukala Project 1990-1997: institutional and financial framework and main achievements

The rehousing of the oukala families was undertaken on the basis of a detailed set of surveys of the built fabric and socio-economic conditions. The type of new accomodation offered was basically determined by family income bracket. A minority of households (10 %) were eligible for FOPROLOS¹²⁷ loans to acquire a house in SNIT or SPROLS housing estates in the suburbs.

The vast majority of households, on the low incomes of manual labourers, cleaners or with little or no formal employment, were uneligible for existing loans, and were thus rehoused on new purpose built estates in the western outlying suburbs of Tunis. The construction of these estates was financed by a Government loan to the Municipality repayable over 25 years at 2 % interest. The houses were to be acquired by their new occupants on a sale-by-rent basis, with monthly rents of around 30 dinars.

The overall cost of the project, as given on a table displayed in an exhibition at Dar Lasram¹²⁸ in late 1997, was as follows:

Table 1: Estimated costs of the Oukala Project

Main project components	Costs in Tunisian dinars, where 1 dinar = \$1 US approx.
construction of 430 new homes on 3 estates	5,300,000
regularisation of property titles and tenure (Fr: <i>assainissement foncier</i>)	1,120,000
rehabilitation of existing property	13,000,000
general maintenance	2,000,000
TOTAL	21,400,000

The first phase of the Oukala Project was completed in 1992, with some 1,700 people rehoused at Douar Hicher in 385 units on a site of slightly under 6 ha. The project was monitored by the National Oukala Committee, comprising representatives of the ARRU, the ASM, the Municipality, the National Army and the main para-statal

¹²⁷ Fonds pour la promotion du logement social

¹²⁸ Dar Lasram: headquarters of the Association Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis

housing finance bodies (SPROLS¹²⁹, SNIT¹³⁰, and Banque de l'Habitat). The site had already been serviced by the ARRU as part of the PNRLR¹³¹ (National campaign to upgrade rudimentary housing), and building works were undertaken by three private contractors to site plans drawn up jointly by the ARRU and the National Army. Housing units took the form of strips of back to back, ground floor only courtyard houses, each unit having a surface area of 60 m², 42 m² being covered. In fact, the site had originally been planned to take half the number of units, the theory being that it was enough to provide minimum living space as people inevitably build on. Plans were available to add first floor rooms to each unit. The new estate, situated close to some of the rougher areas of the western suburbs - notably El Boudria (La Poudrière) - was equipped with a new primary school. No other facilities - market or crèche - were installed.

A number of design faults emerged as people became established in their new homes, and these were on the whole corrected in the second phase of the Oukala Project, which came to an end in 1994 with the completion of a new estate, Hayy El Mechtel, at El Agba, also on the western edge of Tunis. Chief among these drawbacks, (often mentioned in discussions with residents at Douar Hicher) were the fact that the wooden front doors opened directly onto the street, there being no 'veranda', and the small size of the homes. At El Agba the housing units were larger (80 m² on the ground floor), with a small area separating street from house. Metal doors give access onto the street.

The El Agba model was kept at Sidi Hassine Essejoumi, the third oukala rehousing estate completed in late 1996. Perhaps the most distant of the three estates from the Médina, construction was launched in Sidi Hassine on a greenfield site not far from Sebkhet Essejoumi, a seasonal lake to the south west of Tunis. The rehousees concerned came from a wider area than the previous operations, with a number of families from Djbel Jeloud and Melassine (an upgraded squatter area), as well as from the Médina and the Bab Bhar area of mainly nineteenth century buildings today often in a parlous condition through lack of maintenance.

As the building works for the third phase of rehousing advanced in 1996, a new component of the Oukala Project took shape, a home upgrading initiative, referred to

¹²⁹ Société de promotion du logement social

¹³⁰ Société nationale immobilière de Tunisie

¹³¹ Programme national pour la réhabilitation du logement rudimentaire

as *réhabilitation* in French. The aim is to upgrade some 400 buildings housing 1,600 families. This part of the operation is financed by a loan of 15 million dinars, roughly \$15 million¹³², from the Kuwait-based FADES¹³³, a fund for socio-economic development projects in the Arab countries. The rehabilitation programme initially concerned 30 municipally owned buildings housing 164 households, who go into temporary housing during works. Private sector accommodation is also eligible for a municipal loan from a special upgrading fund (*fonds de réhabilitation*) set up with the FADES loan. Loans to private parties, tax deductible and at a below market interest rate of 5 %, are made on the understanding that works are being undertaken to improve property for human habitation. There is no ceiling for these loans, the other chief criterion being the borrower's ability to repay. Works are closely monitored by the ASM, with technical assistance for plans provided free of charge where necessary. As of January 1998, 70 loans had been made, with a further 80 being processed.

As I was gathering information on the Oukala Project and the *réhabilitation* procedures, I found it difficult to obtain clear information on certain aspects, notably:

1. the range of existing tenure and physical characteristics of property;
2. demographic factors re. the Médina population;
3. the expropriation process;
4. the question of the impact of upgrading on rents;
5. the perspectives for rebuilding.

As far as I have been able to ascertain, there is no full survey of the Médina providing a description and analysis of the nature of tenure and physical characteristics, despite the close relationship between the two factors. I was told that many dwellings had fallen into decay due to a range of factors, including absentee foreign landlords, multiple ownership, and the rent freeze which made it impossible for landlords to maintain rented housing to any decent standard. Added to this is the age and condition of much of the housing stock: the vast majority is pre-Second World War, with some much older; construction is often poor (rubble walls); there is also question of the damp from the Médina's rising water table due to the fact that traditional wells and cisterns are no longer in use. Although planning professionals are aware of these

¹³² For the period under study (1990-97) the Tunisian dinar was more or less constantly equivalent to one US dollar.

¹³³ Fonds arabe pour le développement économique et social

factors, there has been no attempt to quantify them - and hence forecasts of the actual needs of the area are impossible.

The lack of information on the built fabric is coupled with a lack of general demographic data - age patterns, social history, nature of employment and income levels. As for the built fabric, the feeling among the planning community - essentially based at the ASM - is that the problems are well known and it is true that the Municipality's Social Welfare Department does have detailed local knowledge of families in hardship.

The expropriation and demolition process is the basis of a fundamental change in the social and built fabric of the Médina, and is handled by a full time lawyer based at the Municipality. Oukala landlords, when identified, receive compensation for the loss of their property, and have priority to acquire the cleared site after demolition. Private owners may also contest the compensation. At the time of writing, I had no clear information on the number of cases of litigation. However, I was told that most landlords were very happy when the compulsory expropriation order was issued: they would be relieved of tenants paying little rent and a property which had reached the end of its useful life.

To move to the future of the remaining housing stock, Municipal and private, potentially refurbished with a Municipal loan in the case of private residential accommodation, rents may rise commensurate with the works undertaken. To what degree I was unable to discover. It was also too early to say whether the loan system was being used by private landlords to produce more expensive rented accommodation, leading to a change in the population structure. Information on grant take-up was also unavailable, although I was told that the vast majority were owner occupiers. Whether grants were being made primarily to poor owner occupiers or salaried groups I was unable to ascertain.

Another area of the Oukala Project which remained unclear to me was the question of the rebuilding of demolition sites. The demolition of privately owned unsafe housing was undertaken by the Municipality. The original concept provided two solutions for cleared, privately owned sites: they would either be reacquired by their original owners for a sum (around 35 dinars per m² of ground cleared) covering demolition / rehousing costs, or they would be sold by auction, with strict specifications for rebuilding. The rate set by the Municipality for property reacquisition is a highly favourable one, given the rapidly rising values in Médina property, at least in certain

key, central areas in the 1990s. By late 1997, only four sites had been rebuilt for housing. The feeling at the ASM was that private developers were holding back until such time as controls relaxed and redevelopment for commercial use became possible. Here again, information is purely subjective. Given the large number of demolition sites, there is a risk of rebuilding radically altering the characteristics of certain neighbourhoods - changes which are at variance with another oft-stated aim of the ASM and the Municipality: the preservation of the traditional urban fabric.

Thus to recapitulate, although I was able to obtain fairly adequate information on the rehousing operation and the broad institutional framework and financial packaging, much data on the renewal area which one might have expected to find was simply not available - notably regarding local factors which might be expected to have an impact on the progress or the clearance and upgrading operations.

Housing and multi-occupancy in the Médina: framing the issue

Since the identification of the phenomenon of *oukalisation* (conversion of dwellings to multi-occupancy) in the early 1970s, the way in which the issue of unfit housing in the Médina has been approached has undergone a number of changes. The next chapter will look at the discursive detail of these shifts. Before closing the present section with summary evaluation of project so far, it seems useful to prepare the way with a look at the shifting approaches to Médina housing adopted by the Municipality of Tunis and its 'operational wing', the ASM over the last thirty years.

The approach to sub-standard housing advocated by the ASM from the time of its establishment in the late 1960s marked a radical break with the demolish and modernise approach which had prevailed from the late 1950s. Established following street disturbances following the demolition / rebuild operations at Sidi El Béchir on the southern side of the Médina, 'from 1970, the ASM considered the treatment of decaying housing to be the key to any regeneration procedure'.¹³⁴ In its early years (1970-1973), the ASM had the prestige of the Unesco Tunis-Carthage Project on its side. Drawing on the thinking taking shape in Europe, and notably France, (where a first generation of urban conservation areas were being established), the ASM worked to establish the first fully integrated urban conservation plan for the Médina of Tunis. Reading the 1972 *Rapport Médina (Plan de sauvegarde)*, there is clearly a major change in the way the old city of Tunis was being thought about: earlier ideologies of the picturesque have disappeared; the Médina is perceived chiefly from the point of

¹³⁴ Abdelkafi, J. (1988) *La Médina de Tunis, espace historique* Paris: CNRS, p.164

view of its spatial organisation, as a *velum* of low courtyard buildings served by a network of streets and blind alleys.

Ultimately, however, at the end of the Tunis-Carthage Project, the actual results in terms of improving the built fabric were somewhat meager: an early nineteenth century palace had been converted into architectural design offices and exhibition space, the reconstruction of an area of the Médina had been launched according to an unusual (for the time) site development plan inspired by the traditional fabric. This project however, which involved mainly rebuilding with some limited demolition, fitted easily with existing procedures. The development of more advanced housing refurbishment mechanisms was still a long way off.

Thus by 1973, in the words of one architect planner I spoke to:

A sort of audit had been undertaken which was completely out of step with the preoccupations of the time; there was no mechanism to implement things, no legal framework ... in a way, it's a miracle that the ASM continued to exist.

In the mid to late 1970s, headed by the leftist intellectual Mohamed El Bahi, the ASM became interested in promoting resident participation in housing upgrading:

In the regeneration area, the new constructions are going up, day by day. The more they take shape, the more the old buildings in the neighbouring areas appear unfit for habitation, on the point of collapse, in a word: destined for demolition. In the face of a threat of evacuation from one of these buildings, the people gather, forming an interest group and manage to change the decisions of the administration. So from the demolition order, (with evacuation of the premises), we return to the solutions put forward by the ASM: consolidation of dwellings by bringing in traditional contractors. As the operation (of improving the building) can thus take place without moving the residents out, they accept the idea and take an effective part in the works, underlining the importance of the dwelling in the life of its residents.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ El Bahi, Mohamed (1976) 'La Médina de Tunis, mise en valeur et réhabilitation' pp.15, paper given at the April 1976 conference, *Villes historiques, sauvegarde et réhabilitation* Tunis: ASM de Tunis, p.1

The self-help experiment, with building materials being made available to residents of a neighbourhood close to the Hafsia was not to last, however. In 1980, local state intervention in urban housing took a new turn with the assistance of the World Bank. Investing heavily in the upgrading of unplanned suburban settlements, the Bank was looking for a fourth major project site. An influential trio comprising the Mayor, the ASM director and the dynamic head of the ARRU, the newly created urban renewal agency responsible for the operational side of things, were able to interest the World Bank in the Hafsia: thanks to new building, overcrowding levels were to be reduced, accompanied by the upgrading of sub-standard housing. Architecturally speaking, the project was to continue along the lines of the first phase of the Hafsia reconstruction, emulating the traditional urban fabric. In terms of financial packaging, sales of new property were to subsidise the cost of infrastructure creation / improvement and feed a special fund for housing improvement.¹³⁶

The Hafsia redevelopment phase II produced spectacular results: highly visible improvement of housing conditions and architectural originality in a decaying quarter. It also mobilised a significant level of public and international finance, a first for the Médina, and created new constraints for anyone wanting to build in the area. The impact of the Project on unfit privately owned housing was negligible, however,¹³⁷ and for the Fourth Urban Programme (1987-1990) the World Bank withdrew from investment in historic areas, despite the vast amount of inner urban sub-standard housing recognised in numerous reports.

In terms of putting the Médina on the map, the Hafsia Project was hugely successful, however, both phase one (1972-1980) and phase two (1982-1983) winning Agha Khan Prizes for Architecture. In a 1995 Agha Khan foundation publication, the project is described as follows:

The Hafsia reconstruction programmes represent exemplary success in revitalising the economic base and diversifying the inhabitants of the old médina of Tunis. Middle-class residents have returned, making the médina once more the locus of social and economic integration. This project is a

¹³⁶ World Bank financial involvement was to be of the order of 40 % of total project cost.

¹³⁷ Initially loans for home improvement had a maximum limit of 7,000 dinars, a figure too low to do any significant work on property with major structural problems. Hence, the low take up of loans by owner occupiers. Although the project aimed to improve privately owned rented housing, take up there was low too, the rent freeze making it impossible for private landlords to take out loans for dwellings with rents well below market levels.

unique reversal of the negative trends seen in urban centres throughout the Muslim world.¹³⁸

Whether 'negative trends' (the decay and collapse of unfit housing?), would have been altered without this project is a moot point. The issue of unfit housing across the Médina remained on hold. As mentioned above, in 1985, the ARRU, in collaboration with the ASM, undertook a survey of multi-occupancy dwellings in the old city. The seriousness of the problem was revealed: more than 90 % of households were tenants, with an average of three people per room in the central Médina. In comparison with earlier surveys, the phenomenon was felt to be spreading.

Thus by the late 1980s there was a certain awareness of the housing problem in the Médina, based on surveys and reports initiated in the early 1970s and updated from then on. Looking at the issue with hindsight, one might say that the stage was set for a more radical form of intervention. Apart from a short lived initiative in the mid-1970s, local state intervention had been of a top-down nature, essentially concerned with the built fabric. The discourse which had taken hold was that new housing had to fit with the old fabric of courtyard houses, even if this meant fewer units to the hectare.¹³⁹ Still lacking before the start of the Oukala Project in 1990 was any sort of institutional framework and financial mechanisms to permit the improvement of the unfit rented housing stock.

¹³⁸ Al Radi, Selma (1995) 'Reconstruction of Hafsia Quarter II, Tunis, Tunisia' in *Architecture beyond Architecture: creativity and social transformations in Islamic cultures. The 1995 Agha Khan Award for Architecture* London: Academy Editions, pp.48-55

¹³⁹ 'Phase I (of the Hafsia Project) received widespread attention because of its ability to contain the earlier misguided efforts at large-scale development in the area, in part by creating the covered souk which organically links the two parts of the old city, and by inserting housing that sensitively emulates the historic fabric.' See *ibid* (note 17) p.49

The Oukala Project: a summary evaluation

In conclusion, in the Oukala Project, as in many other recent initiatives (the Rejim Maâtoug agricultural development project, the National Solidarity Fund), the Tunisian central government clearly has a very strong role in the definition, delivery through arms-length agencies, and 'marketing' of policy to the wider public. It supplies the subsidies - and defines the media approach. A potential source of urban unrest is reduced (or transferred to the urban periphery), city image is enhanced - both important results as Tunisia must operate within the international division of labour to attract inward capital investment and international donor body funds. Riots are off putting for both these categories. In terms of image, of visual and verbal presentation, the initiative gives results.

There remains the question of future scenarios for the built fabric of the Médina, and those in unfit housing, once the current demolition / rehousing programme is completed. What will be the effect on other users of the historic built fabric? Can the consensus on the project in the built environment professions be maintained? Political and material constraints and tight deadlines mean there is rarely time to develop documents fully - or in as detailed a form as would be expected in, say, a European context. As Norman and Thornley¹⁴⁰ note with respect to Europe:

Land-use plans have differing and often marginal relationships to state expenditure on urban policy. National urban regeneration policies, for example in the *contrats de ville* and single regeneration budget, were developed independently of formal plans.

Tunisian policy on multi-occupancy dwellings is clearly much simpler and smaller in scale than the *contrats de ville*. The question of the nature of the institutional framework for the rebuilding programme remained in suspense in late 1996, six years after the launch of the clearance operation. One possibility might be a framework similar to that used for the Hafsia programme, seen locally as an exemplary urban project which has won numerous international architectural awards. Or it could be left to the private sector: the fragmented nature of the sites, their high commercial value, the tight PACT¹⁴¹ building type regulations and the dynamic textile sector

¹⁴⁰ Norman, and Thornley, A. (1996) *Planning in Europe* London: Routledge, p.250

¹⁴¹ Plan d'aménagement de la commune de Tunis. The ASM drew up the detailed zoning regulations for the Médina part of this plan.

implanted in the eastern Médina would suggest a future of small-scale speculative development. A fourth phase to the project is a possibility, probably focusing on unfit housing in the more peripheral areas of the Médina. The home improvement and upgrading loan programme, presented as part of the oukala project, is now established.

It is here that the question of the formal planning system - and its future - arises. Demolition and rehousing in some form was necessary - but how far was it sensitive to the existing historic built environment? Could façades have been saved in certain areas? The question is an acute one, because unless an appropriate framework for home upgrading is created, property will continue to decay - leading to further demolitions, which could take place in the presence of a fully developed conservation area plan, drawing much from French models. But the actual application of such a plan, which may be incomprehensible to agents without the French PSMV¹⁴² type of environment as a reference point, probably lacks the media potential of an operation which pushes back the slums and provides decent housing, *al-maskan al-la'iq*.

More importantly, however, there is the question as to how sensitive the Oukala Project has been to the interests of families in sub-standard housing. To what extent is the problem of the unsafe / unfit housing market being effectively tackled? In my discussions with planners, it seemed to me that there was no clear attempt to evaluate the varied nature of the needs of those in poor housing - or the general demographic and physical characteristics of the Médina. Although the INS, (Institut national de statistiques) has statistics on household characteristics in the Médina for the most recent (1994) census, these do not seem to be analysed in either published or internal reports in order to evaluate the wider picture in the Médina and surrounding areas. The built fabric is evaluated only to the extent of identifying dwellings which pose a danger to their inhabitants. GIS is yet to come into use. To conclude, I would hazard that political commitment, working through compulsory purchase powers, a rehousing operation, and loans to the private sector, will produce an overall improvement in the general quality of the Médina's housing stock. Whether this will work in the interests of low-income, poorly educated or aged residents remains to be seen.

Thus in the next part of my exploration of the Oukala Project, I move to a detailed analysis of the written texts on the issue, both planning documents and press reports. As I read through the planning and promotional material, I came to feel how much

¹⁴² Plan de sauvegarde et de mise en valeur (Conservation Area Plan)

basic quantitative data was missing. In the historic central areas of Tunis, the local state was undertaking an initiative responding to a situation produced by a combination of regulations, social structure, and market forces. As detailed statistical information was limited, any attempt on my part to evaluate the 'success' of the Oukala Project seemed a proposition beyond the means of my research project. Rather the representations of this urban renewal process - 'the stories being told by some to others' - came to seem to me the best line of approach. To tackle this, in a first phase I opted for detailed linguistic and iconographic analysis.

4.5 Endpiece: dates and figures - a chronology of the Oukala Project

The table below follows through the main events in the Oukala Project, with information drawn from the Tunisian print media, planning documents and oral sources.

Date	Main Event	Comments
12 December 1990	Visit of the President of the Republic to two, privately owned oukalas in the Médina	Visit with heavy media coverage. The ASM already has a fair amount of material on multi-occupancy housing. Henceforth the term "oukala" is to gain wide media usage. Visit often referred to subsequently in the media.
7 June 1991	Construction starts at Douar Hicher	
7 November 1991	77 families are moved to Douar Hicher	<i>symbolic date</i> : fourth anniversary of the President coming to power.
29 March 1992	Site works begin at El Agba	
16 December 1992	CMR - the President orders the continuation of the project	
June 1993	site works start at El Agba (site 7 ha)	
14 November 1993	Presidential visit to a construction site of social housing estate in Le Kram-Ouest	
15 November 1993	Distribution of keys to 87 new homes at El Agba	
8 March 1994	Presidential visit to Sidi Hassine	mentioned in PT on 22/6/95; area had severe waste problems

Date	Main Event	Comments
June 1994	Completion of El Agba estate	
August / September 1994	233 families are moved to El Agba	
13 October 1994	The President visits El Agba	<i>symbolic date</i> : anniversary of the last French soldier leaving Tunisia in 1961. (<i>Fête de l'évacuation</i>)
28 January 1995	CMR on social housing; priority to be given to <i>le logement vertical</i> (low rise housing developments).	
27 January 1995	instructions given for the implementation of phase 3	(estimated cost of project phase 21,166,000 Dt)
11 May 1995	Presidential visit to an isolated oukala close to the <i>zone urbaine nord</i>	<i>symbolic date</i> : major Muslim religious holiday, <i>Aïd El-Kabir</i> .
early November 1996	Distribution ceremony for the first loans for home improvements in the Médina	
January 1997	New households move into homes in Sidi Hassine from the Médina, Bab Bhar and Jbel Jeloud	
Spring 1998	Idea of rehousing in the Médina takes root. Discussions re. construction of 50 social housing units in the Médina.	

The aim of this table is to give the reader essential background of the main stages of the project, dates and events which will come to seem important to the reader as they progress through the analysis of texts related to the project, the theme of the next chapter.

5

THE OUKALA PROJECT:
A TALE OF NATIONAL SOLIDARITY
AND INSTITUTIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

5.1 Introduction

In this study of State housing policy in Tunisia, I now 'turn to the text', firstly to a small corpus of planning documents regarding multi-occupancy housing, and subsequently to a much larger corpus (over seventy items) drawn from the Tunisian national papers reporting the progress of the rehousing operation. These texts are often extremely banal - but none the less significant for that, for following Michael Apple¹, I take it that

... texts are not simple "delivery systems" of facts. They are at once the results of political, economic and cultural activities, battles and compromises. They are conceived, designed and authorised by real people with real interests.

Apple was writing on textbook types, and how certain ones get the official authorisation of State sponsorship. The story is not a neat and tidy one - and as will eventually be seen, neither are the urban narratives underlying the story line of the two sets of text under study here. The baseline of this chapter is that by detailed linguistic and semiotic analysis, a contribution can be made to the understanding of the workings of a policy process, of a particular policy style. I look not only for the salient irregularities of linguistic tone and content, but also for silences and regularities. For as Halliday² wrote, '... it is the continuous reinforcement through massive repetition and consistency in discourse which is required to construct and maintain social reality'.

The planning texts are produced by experts in their field. (Note in passing the importance of the 'expert' in late twentieth century society. The term was added by Williams³ to the

¹ Apple, Michael (1995) 'Official knowledge and the growth of the State' in Paul Atkinson, Brian Davies et al (eds) (1995) *Discourse and Reproduction - essays in honour of Basil Bernstein* Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, pp.51-84 (p.52)

² Halliday, M.A.K. (1978) *Language as Social Semiotic* London: E. Arnold, p.170

1983 edition of his *Keywords*). Journalists of various kinds draw on the words and documents produced by built environment experts to write their pieces, the latter group win kudos and further political backing from the positive reporting of their work. There is a complex intertextuality functioning here. And ultimately, both types of text, are of the public domain: the journalistic for its ready availability, the technical, with its display of selected knowledge, for its dependency on public spending for its impact - and the effect it has on people's lives through the decisions taken on its content. For this reason, both types of text merit detailed scrutiny - and have so far little of this type of research has not been undertaken with respect to policy and the press in Tunisia.⁴ I also take it as axiomatic that I can only draw the fuller meanings out of these text corpora by placing them in the context of their production - local society, the various anti-models of neighbouring countries. In this way, the underlying belief system, the patterns of conformity, can better emerge.

My hope is that the resulting knowledge of the workings of textual and iconographic representation will help understanding of what Morris⁵ calls 'the reproduction of relationships' in society. An alternative solution to a social issue is on offer in the textual world; the familiar relationships portrayed, however homely, may not favour the interests of a wider society in an urban area increasingly integrated into the global economy.

To study the textual mechanics of the two corpora I have opted for a loosely thematic approach based on a methodology drawn from recent critical discourse analysis. I begin by tackling the theoretical world of the housing policy documents (the public exhibition of policy will be dealt with in chapter 6). I look at the context of production of these documents, their contents - and the information which seems to me sidelined or excluded. I look at the linguistic conventions, the 'semantic habits' (to use Halliday's terms⁶), by

³ Williams, R. (1976, 1983) *Keywords* London: Fontana

⁴ There is some recent research on the image of women in the Tunisian press, women's rights in Tunisia being considerably more advanced than elsewhere in the Arab states. See Hizaoui, Abdelkrim, Hmila, Mustapha et al (1994) 'L'image de la femme tunisienne dans la presse écrite nationale' in *Journée d'étude sur le rôle et le statut de la femme dans la société tunisienne* Tunis: UNFT, pp.55-102

⁵ Morris, P. (1977) *Meanings and Action* London: Routledge, p.150

⁶ Halliday, M.A.K. and Martin, J.R. (1993) *Writing Sciences* London: Falmer, p.44

which a neutral, professional tone is created. Subsequently, I will examine how these conventions feed into the language of the press reporting.

And so to the media portrayal of an urban issue: slum clearance / housing provision. Here I am directly concerned with what I term 'the public rhetoric of a neo-corporate housing policy' (sub-section 5.3), setting the oukala reporting firmly in the context of other reporting on deprivation in Tunisia. Special attention is paid to the keywords 'solidarity' and 'integration'. Sub-chapter 5.3 introduces the press corpus under a series of sub-headings: I look at how attention is focused through headlines and image (5.3.1), the lexicalisation of participants and places (5.3.2), and the treatment of agents and action (5.3.3); an important aspect of press reporting the world over is the quotation of individuals' words, and 5.3.4 looks at the rehousee viewpoint as represented in the press, while 5.3.5 looks at professional words as quoted by journalists, linking in to the use of figures and technical language; finally 5.3.7 moves to the images of the cityscape in the corpus.

To conclude this analysis, sub-chapter, 5.4 widens the frame once more to situate the oukala reporting in what I refer to as the national symbolic environment, the set of representational practices which operate together to create a coherent national identity feel. Sub-chapter 5.5, 'Consensus and representing policy in the press', makes some tentative conclusions about the implications of the style of reporting analysed - and what it tells us about the nature of expression in the public domain in a contemporary Arab state like Tunisia.

As a conclusion to chapter 5, I have chosen, however, to emphasise the textual practices identified in the corpus by a detailed analysis of two texts covering a specific event in the oukala narrative, namely the visit of the President of the Republic to the Borj Boulahia oukala in May 1995. The reporting is unusual in that it focuses on a named individual - Si Jalloul - a blindman whose image was later to be used in further media campaigns advertising the work of the National Solidary Fund. The reporting is typical in many other ways, however. This fragment of the official 'progress and solidarity' storyline provides a suitable lead into the multiple perspectives on demolition / rehousing opened up in the next chapter, 'Words from the City'. The semiotics of the official 'surprise visit', the *visite inopinée*, are a striking counterpoint to the hopes, regrets and opinions of those rehoused far from their original homes.

5.2 Some technical text: housing and conservation policy documents

The professional position on the multioccupancy issue can be found expressed in a small number of housing, planning and conservation policy documents. In the present section, I examine a sample of these documents, produced since the early 1970s by the various institutions concerned. Given the lack of any structured planning archive, I cannot vouch for the representativity of this sample. However, I feel that it does provide a good idea of the scope of professional writing on the the issue. A chronological list of these documents is provided in Appendix 1, and each document has been given number preceded by the letter P (policy). The documents are also listed by institution in the *littérature grise* section of the bibliography.

It is of course a theoretical act to create such an object of study. By so doing, I hope to have captured something of the organisational and knowledge world on which material intervention in the Médina was based. To see whether linguistic analysis is adequate to the task was one of the main aims of this section.

The documents analysed containing specialised knowledge, the result of in-the-field surveys. They contain results often presented in quantitative, tabular form, and represent professional competence. Some are there to provide a basis for decisions, for the allocation of public resources, for action. It is through the credible information presented in these working papers, reports and *notes internes* that politicians will make their moves, take action. These documents are held to be rational by their producers, I presume, and hence worthy of their place on the committee room table. What I seek to approach in this section (and I undertake a similar examination of media texts), is how the legitimacy of certain of these documents - the 'strategic reports' - is created. These are documents designed to communicate information – and justify action. The basis for discussion, they lie behind communicative events which tie in with the wider communicative practices in society. As such they are therefore worthy of study.

An analysis of these documents would be incomplete without a look at the context of their production and diffusion. The majority of documents originate at the Association Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis, the municipal body responsible for matters related to the old city. The sample also contains three documents from the ARRU, the Agence de rénovation et de réhabilitation urbaine, while three are from diverse ministries, including one 229 page document, the most recent, a report on unfit housing produced for the

Ministry of Public Works by a private consulting firm. All documents were probably intended for limited circulation to other agencies. The earlier ASM documents (early and mid-1970s) tend to bear their authors' names, a reflection of that institution's rather different status at the start of its existence, half urban research unit, half policy implementer. The language of the documents is French, Tunisia's language of modernity, although by the early 1990s a small number of *oukala* documents were being translated into Modern Written Arabic. The change in size and sophistication of these policy documents - from the first rather tentative 15 page *Oukalisation* document of March 1970 to the 1996 consultants' report with numerous tables and photographs - I interpret as reflecting the growth of a confident and sophisticated local planning community. The practice of writing officially commissioned reports on specific issues has clearly taken root. However, it remains the case that the numbers of professionals involved in the production of these reports is small.

The study of these reports from a discourse analysis perspective is not an easy task. Seemingly neutral in stance, written with a high level of abstraction and many facts, according to a dry but fairly elaborate professional jargon, they do not contain the exciting scenarios for unmasking racism or sexism or State perfidiousness offered by media writing. This perhaps makes an attempted analysis of this professional language all the more worthwhile.

By their physical feel, these documents play a crucial role in the establishment of individual professional identity and, more importantly, institutional identity. Artifacts of socio-professional relations, the reports studied here have a characteristic visual style. The ASM reports' appearance is a clear signal of that institution's identity. The earlier reports have distinctive card covers printed with a simple line drawing of a view looking across the roof terraces of the Médina, overprinted with the document title. The covers of the *oukala* reports of the 1990s bear a map of the Médina, printed in blue, with dots marking the location of the *oukalas*; here again the title is overprinted. Generally, the top left hand corner bears the words 'République tunisienne, Ministère de l'Intérieur, Municipalité de Tunis' - a sign of the knowledge producer's position in the State institutional hierarchy. The later ASM reports generally carry that body's distinctive square logo with the Arabic word for 'conservation' (*siyana*) in modernised Kufic script.

Besides cover design, image and wording, the materials used (card or plastic covers, taper or spiral binding, smooth heavy duty white paper inside), 'say' that these documents are

important, to be consulted, used as a reference point, filed and archived. Despite this, the conditions of their conception - even the exact date of their entry into circulation - and often the wider context of their production remain unclear. Glancing through a series of reports on the oukala issue, the outsider can gain a sense of the extent of multi-occupancy in the Médina. The politico-professional circumstances in which a given study was undertaken go unmentioned. Authors are almost always anonymous, and only occasionally mentioned in the earlier documents where the report is situated on uneasy discursive terrain somewhere between 'planner report' and 'academic working paper'.

The exact purpose of documents (if there is a single purpose) thus often remains unclear to the outside reader. This opacity is one of the main themes of the analysis which follows. I will be interested in the imbrication of language and content, the aspects excluded and included in this representation of a social process, namely the basic function of shelter provision. My analysis, therefore, will focus on the shifts in the representation of the Médina multi-occupancy issue, attention being paid to textual and rhetorical strategy and content, lexis and the encoding of social actors and processes. Nominalisation and transitivity, euphemism and other stylistic procedures as well as implicit meanings gleaned from contextual knowledge are important. As a start, however, I look at the uses and implications of keywords in the structuring of this particular sample of impersonal, professional language.

5.2 Some technical text: housing and conservation policy documents

The professional position on the multioccupancy issue can be found expressed in a small number of housing, planning and conservation policy documents. In the present section, I examine a sample of these documents, produced since the early 1970s by the various institutions concerned. Given the lack of any structured planning archive, I cannot vouch for the representativity of this sample. However, I feel that it does provide a good idea of the scope of professional writing on the issue. A chronological list of these documents is provided in Appendix 1, and each document has been given number preceded by the letter P (policy). The documents are also listed by institution in the *littérature grise* section of the bibliography.

It is of course a theoretical act to create such an object of study. By so doing, I hope to have captured something of the organisational and knowledge world on which material

intervention in the Médina was based. To see whether linguistic analysis is adequate to the task was one of the main aims of this section.

A word now on the role of these documents. Containing specialised knowledge, the result of in-the-field surveys with results often presented in quantitative, tabular form, these documents represent professional competence. Some are there to provide a basis for decisions, for the allocation of public resources, for action. It is through the credible information presented in these working papers, reports and *notes internes* that politicians will make their moves, take action. These documents are held to be rational by their producers, I presume, and hence worthy of their place on the committee room table. What I seek to approach in this section (and I undertake a similar examination of media texts), is how the legitimacy of certain of these documents - the 'strategic reports' - is created. First and foremost these are documents designed to communicate information. The basis for discussion, they lie behind communicative events which tie in with the wider communicative practices in society. As such they are therefore worthy of study.

To begin with, a look at the context of production and diffusion. The majority of documents originate at the Association Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis, the municipal body responsible for matters related to the old city. The sample also contains three documents from the ARRU, the Agence de rénovation et de réhabilitation urbaine, while three are from diverse ministries, including one 229 page document, the most recent, a report on unfit housing produced for the Ministry of Public Works by a private consulting firm. All documents were probably intended for limited circulation to other agencies. The earlier ASM documents (early and mid-1970s) tend to bear their authors' names, a reflection of that institution's rather different status at the start of its existence, half urban research unit, half policy implementer. The language of the documents is French, Tunisia's language of modernity, although by the early 1990s a small number of *oukala* documents were being translated into Modern Written Arabic. The change in size and sophistication of these policy documents - from the first rather tentative 15 page *Oukalisation* document of March 1970 to the 1996 consultants' report with numerous tables and photographs - I interpret as reflecting the growth of a confident local planning community. The practice of writing officially commissioned reports on specific issues has clearly taken root. It remains, however, that the numbers of professionals involved in the production of these reports is small.

The study of these reports from a discourse analysis perspective is not an easy task. Seemingly neutral in stance, written with a high level of abstraction and many facts, according to a dry but fairly elaborate professional jargon, they do not contain the exciting scenarios for unmasking racism or sexism or State perfidiousness offered by media writing. This perhaps makes an attempted analysis of this professional language all the more worthwhile.

First, however, a note on the physical feel of the actual documents, so crucial to the establishment of individual professional identity and, more importantly, institutional identity. Artefacts of socio-professional relations, the reports studied here have a characteristic visual style. The ASM reports' appearance is a clear signal of that institution's identity. The earlier reports have distinctive card covers printed with a naïve line drawing of the a view looking across the roof terraces of the Médina, overprinted with the document title. The covers of the oukala reports of the 1990s bear a map of the Médina, printed in blue, with dots marking the location of the oukalas; here again the title is overprinted. Generally, the top left hand corner bears the words 'République tunisienne, Ministère de l'Intérieur, Municipalité de Tunis' - a sign of the knowledge producer's position in the State institutional hierarchy. The later ASM reports generally carry that body's distinctive square logo with the Arabic word for 'conservation' (*siyana*) in modernised Kufic script.

Besides cover design, image and wording, materials used (card or plastic covers, taper or spiral binding, smooth heavy duty white paper inside), say that these documents are important, to be consulted, used as a reference point, filed and archived. Despite this, the conditions of their conception - even their exact date of their entry into circulation - and often the wider context of their production remain unclear. Glancing through a series of reports on the oukala issue, the outsider can gain a sense of the extent of multi-occupancy in the Médina. The politico-professional circumstances in which a given study was undertaken go unmentioned. Authors are almost always anonymous, and only occasionally mentioned in the earlier documents where the report is situated on uneasy discursive terrain somewhere between 'planner report' and 'academic working paper'.

The exact purpose of documents (if there is a single purpose) thus often remains unclear to the outside reader. This opacity is one of the main themes of the analysis which follows. I will be interested in the imbrication of language and content, the aspects excluded and included in this representation of a social process, namely the basic

function of shelter provision. My analysis, therefore, will focus on the shifts in the representation of the Médina multi-occupancy issue, attention being paid to textual and rhetorical strategy and content, lexis and the encoding of social actors and processes. Nominalisation and transitivity, euphemism and other stylistic procedures as well as implicit meanings gleaned from contextual knowledge are important. As a start, however, I look at the uses and implications of keywords in the structuring of this particular sample of impersonal, professional language.

5.2.1 Identifying the issue: keywords

In the post-independence period, the Médina unfit housing issue first gains recognition in the late 1960s with the coining of a neologism, *oukalisation*. The term *oukala*, originally denoting a sort of up-market merchants' hostel within the city walls⁷, was extended to cover the growing quantity of multi-occupancy dwellings in the old city. An *oukala*, according to the 1970 report, could be identified by both quantitative and qualitative criteria:

Quantitative criterion: there is *oukalisation* when each habitable room is occupied by a household.⁸

Qualitative criterion: there is *oukalisation* when the appropriation of outside space (patio) is impossible because of the presence in a single house of several families having no relations between them either by birth or marriage.⁹

The issue is thus very much identified in physical terms on the basis of the type of occupation of domestic space. The document sets out to identify and present, in dispassionate, technical terms, an issue amenable to action, and the process by which individual rooms become homes for families is subsumed under a series of group categories and abstract nouns:

⁷ Association Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis (1970a) *Médina - oukalisation - Tunis* (authors G. Cladel and P. Revault with Hédi Eckert) p.2

⁸ *ibid* (note 7) p.8

⁹ *ibid* (note 7) p.9

<i>classes modestes</i>	lit. modest classes
<i>afflux de ruraux</i>	influx of rural people
<i>bouleversement économique</i>	economic upheaval
<i>transformation</i>	transformation
<i>surdensification</i>	overcrowding
<i>surpeuplement</i>	overcrowding

Tables of figures identify the areas most effected (the central Médina as opposed to the northern *faubourg*). The issue is firmly stated in spatial terms:

Through the typological approach, we saw how, because of the Médina's loss of its functions and the flows of rural people towards the Tunisoise agglomeration, the Médina becomes the place of residence for the modest classes.¹⁰

The nominalisations loss and flow appear as causes of the old city becoming home to the euphemistically labelled 'modest classes'. Any need to locate the phenomenon of oukalisation in a wider context of socio-economic change and deprivation / development is thus avoided.

Two years later (1972), the oukala question is the object of a major report¹¹, and figures in two other research and policy documents. *Oukalisation de la Médina de Tunis*, at 110 pages, is still the most thorough investigation of the phenomenon produced to date, based on the interpretation of detailed sets of dwelling occupation figures: the report establishes a 'typology of occupation' and categorizes the oukalas into four main sub-groups: *micro-oukalisation* and *petite oukalisation*, *moyenne oukalisation* and *grande oukalisation*.¹²

¹⁰ *ibid* (note 7) p.1

¹¹ Association Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis (1972) *Oukalisation de la Médina de Tunis: étude des conditions d'occupation d'un habitat urbain historique* pp.110 (part one: exposé des données)

¹² *ibid* (note 11) p.51

But behind this seemingly neutral technical term, important ideological effects are at work. From the imagined verb *oukaliser*, 'to turn into a multi-occupancy dwelling', the nominalisation manages to collapse a whole process into a single noun, conjuring grammatical (and social) agency out of sight in the process. A dwelling is turned over to multi-occupancy by somebody, there are rents to be collected, tenants to be sought if some move out, works to be undertaken to fit more tenants in, the odd bit of maintenance to do. Who are the people who occupy the dwellings? They can be conveniently subsumed as *ménages*, households - but why are they accepting crowded living conditions in the Médina? Who has turned their property over to this form of occupation? The 1972 report tells us that certain central areas have witnessed the transformation of former dwellings into storage space for local shops and businesses in the souks, but not much more.

The term *oukalisierung*, by the linguistic equivalent of a sleight of hand, would seem to enable the researcher-writers of the report to avoid tackling the inner workings of the substandard, dangerous housing market: the presence (or absence) of slumlords, the type of families most open to this form of deprivation, the eventual strategies for escaping the ghetto. In short, this professional neologism, (along with its equivalent of rural origin, *gourbification*¹³), permits a focus on housing deprivation without examination of the other factors which may have pushed a family into precarious accommodation.

Not that writers of this report were likely to have been unaware of the other social actors involved. There are hints of these more differentiated social groups in the dry details of numbers of households per dwelling, indications of a more nuanced, cultural classification of dwelling types beyond the simple *unité architecturale* and the numerous 'modest houses' and 'urban houses':

¹³ From *gourbi*, rudimentary / semi-permanent rural dwelling, possibly built of stone and adobe with natural thatched roofing. The term *gourbification* can be found used to describe the growing dereliction of the Médina taking place as the population changed in the 1960s.

<i>agents sociaux</i>	social actors
<i>vieille bourgeoisie beldiya</i> (p.61)	long established Tunisois families
<i>Siciliens, Maltais, et Israélites</i>	Sicilians, Maltese and Jews
<i>Sudistes</i>	people from the South
<i>co-héritiers</i> (passim)	co-heirs
<i>propriétaires indivisionnaires</i>	part-owners
<i>populations non-musulmanes</i>	non-Muslim populations
<i>exploitants</i>	operators, users
<i>type de logement</i>	type of dwelling
<i>maison noble</i> (p. 69)	patrician residence
<i>la partie seigneuriale (de la maison)</i>	the noble part (of the house)

Despite these references, the process by which a piece of property passed from the hands of departing Sicilians or Jewish Tunisians to an agent of some kind, just like the management of the 'big oukalas', remains completely opaque. This is in no way to belittle the vast amount of quantitative description contained in the report. My point is to stress that by a simple nominalisation, social process and actors could be sidelined. The matter at stake could be one household overcrowding - a wider range of deprivation indicators was not adopted to describe social exclusion in the Médina.

By focusing on the issue of the built fabric, the issue could be kept 'neutral', in a sense. Accurate information on incomes and expenditure is notoriously difficult to obtain in any circumstances. By identifying a solely physical, housing problem it may be that the planning team at the ASM in the early 1970s avoided, consciously or unconsciously, treading on any toes (in writing) in the wider politico-economic context.

I now turn to the other keywords of the early 1970s planning documents: *sauvegarde* and *mise en valeur*, both imports from the French built environment professions who at the time were becoming deeply involved in urban conservation. *Sauvegarde* (lit. 'safeguard', in this urban context 'preservation') along with *mise en valeur* (more problematic to translate - perhaps 'valorisation' works best) cover the same semantic field as conservation in the British setting. To be safeguarded is a *tissu urbain* ('an urban fabric'), with unique characteristics reflecting historic and cultural values; in the Médina:

... everything is organised to respond to an internal logic, a given cultural system, that of the inhabitants of a town which has undergone the weight of a past marked by a religious ethic, that of North African Islam, in all its structural uniformity.¹⁴
(P6, p.4)

The justification and defence of the 'logic' of the historic Muslim town was at the time very much against the thinking of the dominant, political élite. The State-led trend was 'development', accompanied by a rhetoric of modernization. The Médina was more widely seen as representative of an older culture which deviated from the norms of modernity. The modernist élite was conceptualizing the Médina (and by extension those who lived there) as backward looking.

All of which made the new constellation of key words problematic - and potentially a site of conflict. The new terms, the focal point of planning texts featuring technico-abstract nouns such as *renovation* and *réhabilitation*, were uncertain values in the dominant binary relationship decadence versus modernity, French rule versus independence, Beylicate / Republic. The activity of *sauvegarde* might be based on modern norms, but how could this place of poverty and backwardness which was the Médina (for many) be worth the application of these conservation norms - or even 'valorised'. The potential for conflict is in part reduced by the use of nominals - the broad, portmanteau terms such as *oukalisation*, *sauvegarde* and *mise en valeur* permit a blurring of responsibility for action. The insight is not a new one, but nevertheless useful for our understanding of slum clearance policy. The following example, from the conclusion to the October 1972 report, is instructive:

The essential thing, for us, would be to make use of powerful trends in order to make them the reliable basis for a housing improvement policy, and, through this, for a policy to safeguard the architectural heritage of the historic urban core of the Tunis urban area.¹⁵

The translation gives something of the abstract nature of the original. The key fields of housing and heritage are there - 'policy' is to build the link. But the message is opaque. I

¹⁴ Association Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis (1975) *Opération de rénovation et de réhabilitation dans le centre historique de la Ville de Tunis* (author Mohamed El Bahi) pp.26

¹⁵ *ibid* (note 7) p.110

translate *assainissement* by improvement - but the original French term carries the ideas of cleaning up something corrupt, unhealthy or unsalubrious. The heritage is firmly qualified as architectural. Here in this report, the first to discuss the oukala issue in any detail, a professional model of the world is projected onto that urban object, the Médina, its housing and people. This twin categorisation, imported from Europe at a time when the preservation of the built heritage was increasingly the order of the day, was to remain the background thinking to the way in which the multi-occupancy issue was perceived. This association of heritage conservation and housing improvement makes the issue more manageable, more presentable. Like the other neutral categorisations of people listed above, the categories serve the needs of the producer community - and are the lexical face of the asymmetrical relationship between professional groups and those in miserable housing. There are, however, traces in the oukala documents of attempts to escape the certitudes of professional classification.

5.2.2 On serendipity and writer viewpoint

A major shift in ASM thinking on the oukala issue is marked by the 1977 *Tentative de réhabilitation dans un quartier de la Médina*.¹⁶ Whether underpinned by effective new changes on the ground or not, the paper marks a break with the impersonal tone of earlier documents - perhaps unsurprisingly, given the leftist commitment of its author, urban planner Mohamed El Bahi.¹⁷ The document divides into four sections, 'The social environment', 'Life in the neighbourhood and perception of space', 'Area of operations' and 'Signs of participation', and describes how a housing improvement operation was conducted by the ASM on municipally-owned dwellings in the severely decayed rue des Djerbiens area in the mid-1970s. In its style, the paper is certainly the liveliest of the planning corpus; the following extracts give something of the tone:

Why do people prefer the Médina to improved areas? Quite simply because its facilities answer the needs of its inhabitants, needs which are certainly limited because they are also those of a population with a low to average standard of living, barely out of the subsistence economy. And finally, there are actual needs which are satisfied by existing facilities. Not far from the quarter are schools

¹⁶ ASM / Mohamed El Bahi (1977) *Tentative de réhabilitation dans un quartier de la Médina*,

¹⁷ In the mid-1990s an academic with the planning section of the Tunis Ecole nationale d'architecture et d'urbanisme.

where the children can go on foot; to go from home to work there is no need of transport. Added to this, the cost of living is judged to be 'cheap', and people get used to neighbourhood life very quickly. In short, the poor person (original: le pauvre) can live there without too much difficulty. (p.6)

(on contacts with the neighbours)

Differences of living standard and place of birth are often mentioned as being at the root of tense relationships with neighbours; however, both long established city dweller and recently urbanized rural migrant often quote proverbs and sayings of the prophet which recommend treating neighbours well. Some inhabitants prefer not to frequent the neighbours when they are not relations: 'a lot of neighbours' means 'a lot of problems' for them. Contact is limited to 'hello'. But there are those who say they are not interested in what goes on outside their home. Others, however, are proud of knowing everybody. (p.7)

And finally, an extract from a paragraph dealing with perceptions of the rue des Djerbiens neighbourhood:

How do these inhabitants, attached as they are to a certain neighbourhood way of life, feel themselves to be judged by others, those who frequent them daily, but from outside the area? Here opinions are divided, and there are those who think that the others, the outsiders, consider their neighbourhood unfit, inhabited by people of low morals, with lots of 'hooligans', unsafe at night: 'the Chicago of the city'. But there are others who say: 'people think well of our neighbourhood, they find it well made with all the necessary facilities, you can find famous mosques and busy souks.' (p.7)

Specimens from the section 'Life in the neighbourhood and perception of space', these extracts demonstrate a will to portray poor residents as people with valid ways of getting by, making a living, appreciative of the city centre and the opportunities it offers: they are *les habitants, les gens, les voisins, les ménages*, people with views and preferences, generally expressed in sentences introduced by the pronoun *on* ('one'). For the reader with prior knowledge of the Médina, this sector of the report evokes many a familiar opinion.

The section 'Signs of participation' is without precedent in the oukala literature. Written from the standpoint of an anonymous *nous* ('we'), it recounts how the delicate matter of

undertaking improvement work was handled, how a 'climate of confidence' was created which permitted upgrading to be undertaken without residents feeling that they might lose their homes:

Working sessions were organised at the ASM, initially with local representatives: municipal councillors, the city works department, representatives of the local party office, délégués from the governor's office, and omdas (neighbourhood officials).¹⁸ During these meetings, the residents were informed of the content and scope of our intervention on site. After these first contacts, we invited the population concerned, and numerous residents came to our meetings. Technical experts explained the projects, informing them of all the stages ... (pp.11-12)

...

A major awareness raising campaign was undertaken at different levels; an academic and technical team was formed at the ASM's planning office, its main role being to contact residents: landlords, tenants, de facto occupants, to provide them with precise technical and legal assistance about their rights and duties as regards housing. (p.12)

This participation, which we can call people's participation, had a number of seemingly simple aspects:

- the household which accepted, as its roof was being repaired, to live in one room or stay with its neighbours;
- the housewife who tells the builder how she would like her space to be divided - take two metres from the big room to create a separate kitchen;
- the girl who goes to bring water from the fountain to supply the building site, the housewife preparing tea for the workman as they mend her roof. (p.13)

The document is thus highly suggestive of how a relationship between representatives of the local authorities, planners and people in overcrowded housing was built up. The planners at Dar Lasram, on the basis that conditions in the six *îlots d'intervention* in the

¹⁸ Tunisia has a dual local government system. The municipalities (*communes*, subdivided into *arrondissements*) provide a number of urban services and are in part financed by local property tax. For administrative matters, the country is also sub-divided into governorates, which subdivide into *délégations* and, at the lowest level, the *omda's* office. The *omda*, often a member of the ruling RCD party, can wield considerable authority: he (and it almost invariably is a he), is responsible for residence certificates and manages lists of those eligible for food and clothes parcels and other handouts, generally channelled through the local RCD party offices. Both administrations come under the Ministry of the Interior.

Djerban neighbourhood were among the worst in the Médina (average persons / room, 2.9, with 72 % of homes overcrowded, 62 % sharing accomodation with one or more households), had reached the decision to act as catalysts for some sort of housing improvement. They listened to the population, observed its responses, raised awareness, as is evident from the extracts above. They seem to have attempted to present the range of options available to the residents, and, the paper concludes, the level of intervention necessary on the basis of the needs revealed. Thus the Municipality was to build 43 new homes, and the Ministry of Public Works, using FNAH money, was to improve all the *logements collectifs* (note the term *oukala* is not used). 'The ASM will be the operator of this second phase which requires looking for another form of participation', the document concludes.¹⁹

'Qui nécessite la recherche d'une autre form de participation'. The phrase leaves open the issue of who will be undertaking this search for participation. The document seems to conclude that works were undertaken in a community spirit, with people commenting, making suggestions. The language of the document, the active, doing, inclusive 'we' of the planners, the detached view of the people concerned who remain 'residents', *les gens*, suggests that Dar Lasram staff had come to act on behalf of the area's people.

Resolutions were not being reached by the community:

on a lancé une campagne d'assainissement ('an clean-up campaign was launched')²⁰

on a fait appel à des volontaires étudiants ('an appeal was made for student volunteers')²¹

Les réunions d'information ... ont préparé les gens psychologiquement ('the information meetings prepared people psychologically')²²

¹⁹ *ibid* (note 16) p.15

²⁰ *ibid* (note 16) p.12

²¹ *ibid* (note 16) p.13

²² *ibid* (note 16) p.13

These quotations, a few fragments from the document, give an insight into the mind-set shaping ASM action in the mid-1970s. The modest, impersonal pronoun *on*, the passive construction creating an active role for the meetings (and not the people doing the speaking at the meetings) are revelatory of the nature of how participation was viewed by the writer. The project initiative, however, seems to have been limited to providing an initial spark. Subsequent documents do not provide any evidence of opening-up the public discussion by the disadvantaged to improve their condition.

Nevertheless, to the best of my knowledge, the 1977 *Tentative de réhabilitation* remains the only document which raises the question of tenant participation in such a concrete, specific way in a register somewhere between sociological field note and technical report, with a hint of the academic paper. The fact that no further planning documents present the unsafe housing issue in this light raises a lot of questions: was a participant approach to home upgrading ineffective? too unwieldy? - or looked upon with disfavour by neighbourhood municipal and political representatives? (The difficulty of dealing with these groups is briefly mentioned). Given the links of patronage between the PSD²³ and the poorest members of society, maintained on religious occasions with handouts, tensions may well have arisen, hampering the project, which subsequently went unwritten. This document thus raises many questions which go unanswered. However, as I researched the experience of the rehoused populations in the 1990s (see chapter 6, below), issues of neighbours and work, access to resources and facilities resurfaced. El Bahi's writing in 1977 has the considerable merit of raising these matters, albeit in a very personal style. Popular participation seems to have become a remote serendipity for later generations of planners working on unsafe, unfit Médina housing.

²³ Parti socialiste destourien, Tunisia's ruling party since independence in 1956. In 1988, the party was renamed the Rassemblement constitutionnel démocratique, the RCD. The change of name is less dramatic in Arabic: *destouri* means constitutional.

5.2.3 Household knowledge

Speaking of the extensive survey work undertaken by the ASM de Tunis in its early years, one planner told me:

We were able to visit the 15,000 homes of the Médina without any problems; everywhere people said 'Come in, look around, see how we're living.'

Right at the start of the 1970s, the Médina's homes became the object of detailed surveys. The once closed, private world of the Tunis Muslim home was opened to the expert planners' gaze - doubtless because of the huge change in the population of the Médina following independence in 1956. As my informant put it, trying to explain Médina people's willingness to have their living conditions surveyed:

There was an explosion of youth and modernity at the time ... we were people who had the reputation of being outside the ruling party - mish hizb - and the very fact that we were defending the Médina which Bourguiba wanted to demolish made us well liked.

Detailed household knowledge, my informant might have added, was of course essential to the construction of a valid, professional discourse on the historic urban fabric, dwellings and people. In this section, I look at how this knowledge, these figures and tables are situated in the planning reports.

I take a small sample of five reports from across the period during which the oukala issue has been the focus of professional concern, namely reports from 1972, 1974, 1981, 1991 and 1995. I take the deployment of figures to be a key part of the business of report writing, and sought to see what is presented (and how) and how this knowledge shifts in time. There is a problem with analysing this part of the corpus, however. Although I am not strictly concerned with analysing the accuracy of the figures - and hence with evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of policy - the boundary between discourse analysis and project evaluation is not as clear cut as I would have liked. My focus is the usage of technical figures in the text - a preliminary evaluation of the Oukala Project will be found in the conclusion, sub-section 7.1, 'The suburban solution'.

An ASM report from 1972, *Oukalisation de la Médina de Tunis. I exposé des données*, remains the most detailed and impressive report produced to date. Housing conditions in the Médina are analysed for 146 blocks (*ilots*) identified for the historic urban area *stricto sensu*, base on a 1/4000 scale plan and a file for each block. The writers establish a clear typology for the mode of occupation, and average useable area for housing units (*logements*) and the typology of each block is discussed. An oukala is given the following tight definition:

... a housing unit was taken as oukalised in cases where three households occupy the three useable rooms of which the useable area is less than 8.6 m² per person.

Without going into the details of the 1972 report any further, it is clearly important as the first attempt to present exhaustive data on conditions of domestic overcrowding in the Médina. Crucially, this household knowledge is used to make a comparison with the situation across the city. Housing conditions, in terms of overcrowding, turn out to be similar to those prevailing in the rest of Greater Tunis.²⁴ The detailed knowledge of the households leads the writers to conclude:

It is certainly more 'conservationist' to see the 'modest houses' and the small-size 'urban houses' - which constitute most of the built heritage of the central Médina - become more heavily occupied with extended family than abandoning them to oukalisation.²⁵

On the basis of these detailed figures, the authors thus suggest 'the establishment of a housing policy which would encourage - rather than resist - overoccupation by family and relatives (*surdensification*).²⁶

Unfortunately, however, the 1972 report in its use of detailed block by block information, is the only one to base discussion of scenarios and a policy argument on Médina-wide, recent household data.

²⁴ ASM de Tunis (1972) *Oukalisation de la Médina de Tunis. I exposé des données*, p.106

□

²⁵ *ibid* (note 24) p.109

□

²⁶ *ibid* (note 24) p.109

□

I now move to the short (13 page) 1977 ASM / El Bahi report on the Djerban neighbourhood. This document mixes qualitative information with a few figures indicating tenant status, geographical origins of households, and percentage of overcrowding (72 % - as compared with 64 % and 67 % in other neighbouring quarters). Here the figures serve as a starting point for a report and discussion of local community participation in the upgrading of a small number of housing units.

In 1981, a regional housing conference produced a document on housing in the Tunis area entitled *Réhabilitation et rénovation dans le District de Tunis*. Figures are given describing the Médina:

Housing conditions: density is very high, higher even than in the *quartiers spontanés*: 520 inhabitants per hectare on average, 2.8 households per housing unit, 2.7 persons per room ... 56 % of residents live in a quarter of [available] housing units.²⁷

No sources or dates for this information are given. It is now quite clearly accepted that housing conditions are sub-standard:

Projects underway:

The 750 oukaliséd houses of the central Médina house 5,000 households, each with an average surface area of 30 m². The programme provides for the improvement of the built fabric and reduction of densities by rehousing one third of the population.²⁸

In fact, this document is essentially an account of upgrading initiatives underway for the self-built housing areas. A few figures on the multi-occupancy situation help ground a statement of (pious) intention regarding possible government action of some kind.

Ten years later on, the 1991 *Projets et réalisations pour la promotion de la Médina* represents a considerable leap forward.²⁹ This is an unusual document in that it presents

²⁷ ASM (1981) *Réhabilitation et rénovation dans le District de Tunis*, p.4

²⁸ *ibid* (note 27) p.4

²⁹ ASM (1991) *Projets et réalisations pour la promotion de la Médina*

a very wide view of a decade of policy practice in the Médina, including a discussion of the various forms of land-use regulation in use. With respect to housing upgrading and multioccupancy in the Médina, figures are used very explicitly as a basis for argumentation:

The square metre of floorspace in a rehabilitated unit, including basic sanitary facilities comes to the third of the cost of square metre of new building.³⁰

A bald, figure-based statement of fact (no sources given) is used to promote the argument for upgrading the existing built fabric. On the multioccupancy side of things, the figures have become even simpler:

Today, 3,000 families, i.e. 15,000 people live in the oukalas of oukaliséd houses which belong almost entirely to private landlords and are in a greater state of deterioration than the remainder of the buildings.³¹

Again, no sources are given. The 'programme' mentioned in the 1981 report is still in its infancy. Essentially the role of the figures here is to draw attention to the issue, by implying that since 'a large number of people' are concerned, this is important. The figures are not related to the housing conditions in the city as a whole, and there is no mention of related trends in building use.

The most recent reports I have selected for examination in terms of their use of household knowledge are the March 1995 *Projet "Oukalas", 3ème tranche*³², and the April 1995 *Oukala Project: results and future prospects*³³ (in Arabic). The former report contains detailed figures on the condition of the built fabric (although not on a global basis as in the 1972 report³⁴), and the socio-economic status of heads of household. There is a shift in area focus and in the categorisation - the project now provides data on the Bab Bhar

³⁰ *ibid* (note 29) p.7

³¹ *ibid* (note 29) p.27

³² ASM de Tunis (1995) *Projet "Oukalas", 3ème tranche*, March 1995

³³ ASM de Tunis (1995) *mashru' al-oukayil: injazat wa afaq al-mustaqbal*, April 1995

³⁴ *ibid* (note 24)

arrondissement³⁵ (which covers part of the early twentieth century city centre), as well as on two former squatter settlements, Jbel Jeloud and Mellassine.

The latter report, in Arabic, provides, in addition to the now familiar figures on numbers of families rehoused, the costs of each component of the project, details of family occupations and incomes, and a breakdown of the phased rise in the cost of the monthly sale-by-rent payments for new property.

Although these two reports contain large amounts of numerical data, this is always inserted into the text or (in the case of the former document), presented in tabular form. There are neither nomograms nor pie charts. Ultimately, what is striking is the fact that despite all the data, no sources are given. Statistics are not used to develop an analysis of policy so far or to predict trends. The figures are there, but they seem to say only 'effective action was taken'. In the last but one paragraph of *Achievements and future perspectives*, the reader finds:

During an inner cabinet meeting held on 29 March 1995, His Excellency the President of the Republic announced the taking of the following measures to continue the implementation of the Oukala Project and the execution of the third phase and the provision of the necessary funding ...³⁶

The report presents the costs, but fails, however, to say how these were evaluated - how they fit in with wider Municipal policy (as a proportion of spending), how costs have changed since the beginning of the operation. The display of numerical data in this final report of April 1995 shows that the oukala team or committee are effective knowledge administrators, specialists providing an important base for actions confirming the validity of technical evaluation. In short, they are often involved with displays of expertise, rather than actually developing it.

In a sense, then, the strategic deployment of figures is an essential part of being a convincing expert-knowledge provider. Whereas in the 1972 document, the authors use

³⁵ The ASM defines the Médina as an area of 270 ha, covering the central Médina and the two faubourgs. This does not correspond to the arrondissements or municipal wards, which for the Médina are Bab Bhar, Sidi El Béchir and Bab Souika, all of which include some non-Médina territory.

³⁶ *ibid* (note 33) p.14

the figures to identify a trend in housing and recommend courses of action, in the 1990s the documents available present figures confirming action. There is no attempt to predict the future or discuss scenarios. To the best of my knowledge, there are no internal memoranda produced within the institutions concerned which do so.

The household knowledge available, sporadically produced and without a real concern to monitor developments in either built fabric quality, household characteristics or values and rents, ultimately comes to play a primarily rhetorical role in the justification of a policy line. The next task, therefore, is to move from these fragmentary housing statistics to the word-based rhetorical strategies employed, be it consciously or unconsciously, by the authors of the *oukala* reports.

5.2.4 The mechanics of a convincing policy rhetoric

As described above, the earliest documents of the *oukala* corpus are for the most part based on the quantifiable indicators of overcrowding and dwelling type. I now propose to examine something of the rhetorics which have helped to create a convincing policy line. I look at a selection of documents in chronological order; in each case I sketch out the context of their production and content, before focusing on specific textual and linguistic features. I begin with a quotation from a 1970 document³⁷ produced by a group of foreign experts at the time when the ASM was just getting established as the institution with information and authority on inner urban questions. The document is entitled *Médina - oukalisierung - Tunis*.

Stopping at looking only for the types of houses which might face deterioration, the ethnic groups which create conditions for it, would be to cut oneself off from the real solution to apply to this problem.

One of the elements is the slide from owner occupancy to tenant occupancy, which appears inevitable according to the study of the norther faubourg and the central Médina. The expansion of the phenomenon of rented housing is accompanied by an overcrowding of premises: an indication of an inadaptation of

³⁷ ASM de Tunis (1970) *Médina - oukalisierung - Tunis*

inhabitants and building. Eventually, this can only have harmful consequences for buildings and their occupants ...

It is thus essential to monitor this development (Fr: *évolution*) and eventually to orient it so that it may lead to a better appropriation of space and not to the misuse (Fr: *frustration*) of it.³⁸

The extract, at first reading, from the end of the report, seems to propose a reasoned case for monitoring the phenomenon of overcrowding. The language is abstract, based on nominalisations, some metaphorical: 'the slide from owner occupancy', 'the expansion of this phenomenon', 'the inadaptation of inhabitants and building', etc. In terms of agency, the document is written from an impersonal, expert observer standpoint (as one might expect). The specifically identified agents are presumably those most at risk from bad housing: 'ethnic groups'³⁹ (who are seen to make deterioration more likely), 'inhabitants' and 'occupants'. What is sidelined is the how and why of the process of deterioration and the move towards rental, which appears inevitable.

Thus the question of transitivity needs to be considered. Processes such as the 'slide from owner occupancy' and 'this development' presuppose participants and socio-economic and politico-historical context, and they involve specific agents. These participants in the process of housing stock deterioration are left out, at the following examples illustrate:

It is thus indispensable to monitor this development and eventually to orient it so that it may lead to a better appropriation of space and not to a misuse of it

To stop at looking for the sorts of houses open to deterioration, the ethnic groups favouring it, would be to cut oneself off from the real solution to bring to this problem.

³⁸ *ibid* (note 37)

³⁹ The use of the term 'ethnic groups' seems to me an indication that the document was authored by foreign experts. The term may be an oblique reference to the departure of the Italians, Tunisian Jews and Maltese had constructed and occupied a large proportion of Médina property prior to independence. On the other hand the term may be making a distinction between rural and urban Tunisians, considering newly arrived Djerbans, North-Westerners and others as 'ethnic groups'. Tunisian Arab writers see the country as ethnically homogeneous, with a population of Sunni Muslim Arabs, the only exception being a tiny Berber population, less than 1 %, in certain south-eastern areas. Whatever the case, the report writers would have observed the move of a poorer population into hitherto well-maintained property in the 1960s.

The original French text makes use of infinitive forms (*s'arrêter, rechercher, se couper, apporter*) where the agent is left unspecified - presumably both planners and political leadership are implied. The use of this form permits a certain distancing from the subject matter on the part of the writers, who in the same paragraph indicate that an unspecified 'ethnic group' may be behind deterioration.

With a certain learned register and numerous abstract nouns, the writers of *Médina - oukalisation - Tunis* convey the message that the overcrowding of Médina property (with harmful consequences for buildings and occupants), is a matter to be monitored. But they seem to remain cut off from the 'real solutions'. The unstated context is important: in the 1960s, residence in Tunis, as a number of writers testify, was the goal of large numbers of poor rural families who until the collectivisation of farms had nevertheless remained on the land. The city offered the promise of better education, better life chances, and the broadcasts on the national radio of Si Lahbib (as the President was familiarly referred to), indicated that improvements were available to all.

The document *Médina - oukalisation - Tunis* offers a dominant reading to qualified professionals similar in background assumptions to those of its authors. By its linguistic preferences, its reification of processes it is most certainly avoiding acknowledgement of any conflict between users of the built fabric.

I now move along a few years, to a document produced a decade later (1981) for a regional housing conference: the report on *Réhabilitation et rénovation dans le District de Tunis*.⁴⁰ The context is one of a meeting, sponsored by the Ministry of the Interior, also the *ministère de tutelle*, the ministry responsible for the District, the Tunis regional planning authority established as a condition for a World Bank loan in the mid-1970s. The report provides a thorough overview of policies on the clearance of rudimentary dwellings (*gourbis*), and rehousing policies in peripheral areas, and covers operations in the Médina as well, the other major problematic housing area in the District.

The report begins thus:

⁴⁰ Ministry of the Interior / ASM (1981) *Réhabilitation et rénovation dans le District de Tunis*

... and we will put forward, on the basis of the problems and deficiencies noted, some proposals for effectively undertaking the task of conserving and improving the existing property stock and avoiding the deterioration of housing and the growth of precarious, unfit and anarchic neighbourhoods.

The writers of the document establish their claim to speak on the issue with an authoritative 'we'. The document then provides a clear and unambiguous account of the current situation (rehabilitation and new building), programmes and their implementation (for both rehabilitation and new building), and finishes with recommendations. It may be that the seminar on which this document is based was instrumental in obtaining World Bank funding for the second phase of the Hafsia redevelopment in the Médina.

As regards the Médina, the report identifies two operations which are at the study stage:

The rehabilitation of the Sidi El Baïen neighbourhood (2.6 ha)

... one third of land in the neighbourhood belongs to the Municipality; the area has 30,000 m² of floor area for rehabilitation and 10,000 m² of new housing is to be built;

The rehabilitation and *assainissement* of the oukalisated houses

The 750 oukala dwellings of the central Médina are home to 5,000 households with an average of 30 m² of space per household. The programme provides for the *assainissement* (upgrading ?) of the buildings and the reduction of density through rehousing one third of households.⁴¹

In the summary, the document provides a list of projects currently being studied which might be integrated into the national rehabilitation and redevelopment programme:

In the Médina

The projects under study at the ASM all concern the lower Médina. This sector, which was the object of a redevelopment zone plan in the July 1954 decree, is the area which needs urgent intervention:

- extremely high occupation density: up to 1,000 inhabitants per ha;
- high level of oukalisation;

⁴¹ *ibid* (note 40) p.15

- the highest level of built fabric deterioration - many buildings almost in ruins.

The main objectives in the lower Médina are given as follows:

1. Quartier Sidi Mehrez. A project concerned mainly with enhancing heritage: mosque and zaouia of Sidi Mehrez, Dar Monastiri, Souk Sidi Mehrez, Place Bab Souika
2. Quartier El Hafsia. A project concerned mainly with social housing. The redevelopment of the neighbourhood, started with the first phase; is to be finished. The area includes sections for rehabilitation (approx. 6 ha) and renewal areas (approx. 3 ha)
3. Quartier Franc. A social and cultural project. The aim is to rehabilitate the highly deteriorated housing in the quarter (c. 8 ha) and to encourage the development of cultural activities, like for example the conversion of the Fondouk des Français into a cultural centre.
4. Quartier de la Kherba. A project concerned mainly with social housing: the quarter, of 6 ha, is to be redeveloped through a new building / rehabilitation operation.

Nobody could seriously disagree with these objectives. The redevelopment of areas 2, 3 and 4 could no doubt be read as making up for the social housing deficit in the Médina. This piece of text has a gentle, euphemistic character, however. Projects concerned with 'enhancing heritage' and *activités culturelles* are unlikely to offend anyone - and there is no mention of any interest groups who would need to be consulted by redevelopment projects. (In the case of 4, the Kherba area, still an empty site today, it was the souk traders for whom the space was and still is vital for loading goods onto lorries; in the case of 3, the Quartier Franc, the area has long had an unsavoury reputation, based on petty crime and a focus of legal prostitution in Sidi Abdallah Guèche - the development of 'cultural activities' would seem an unlikely proposal for an area with extreme levels of poverty and a population concerned chiefly with survival).

This 1981 document, although it describes the upgrading of self-built settlements in figures and words, it also playing a fundamentally rhetorical function. The conclusion,

figuring as it does a number of desirable objectives, would suggest a broad consensus around a meeting table. Unfortunately however, the proposals are really essentially signs that something should or could be done.

Similar optimistic rhetoric can be found in a 1983 report⁴² produced by the Ministry of Housing:

The experience of Tunisia in terms of curative action allows the country, which is in the avant-garde in the field, to draw certain conclusions.

Demolish the leas possible; be content to offer a level of services within the reach of the beneficiaries; ensure the highest possible level of repayments to be able to repeat projects; ensure that homes can be extended and that investment can be developed, while at the same time establishing a framework for self-built housing and an adequate information system for beneficiaries.

These are important lessons, above all for the future, especially given that the municipal appetite for rehabilitating and new building is constantly growing. But a no less important lesson is the establishment of a preventive dimension to the rehabilitation and renewal policy.

Who is to draw conclusions and undertake action? Tunisia, the municipalities or specialised agencies? The text, based on imperatives recommending action is unclear and seems to confound all three. The text also carefully avoids conflicts of interest: 'a level of services within reach of beneficiaries' - who sets the prices and subsidies? do all pay the same regardless of income; 'a framework for self-built housing' - where does this leave unregistered sub-developers?; 'a preventive dimension' - is this suggesting a reform of rent control? This short extract, like the 1981 extract analysed previously, seems to set up viable, action-focused goals. An involved, analytic reading reveals much ambiguity? however.

I conclude this section on the workings of Tunisian housing improvement rhetoric with a look at a recent document in Arabic, *The Oukala Project: achievements and perspectives*

⁴² Ministère de l'Habitat (Direction de la réhabilitation et de la rénovation) (1983) *L'expérience de la Tunisie en matière de réhabilitation et rénovation*, p.6

for the future.⁴³ Presenting the successful completion of the first two phases of the rehousing project, the document also provides an account of the rehabilitation programme. To my knowledge, it is the most complete document on the project to date, and accompanied by site and dwelling plans and a colour photograph supplement of new building, restored monuments and houses, it was probably intended to present the project at a major policy meeting. In the introduction, the document represents the orthodox ASM thinking on the causes of the phenomenon:

In October 1990, the government entrusted [the ASM] with the preparation of an operational programme capable of eradicating this disease which had incessantly eaten away at [the fabric of] the old city and even that of the modern city or Bab Bhar, where some of the buildings had reached the point [where they] threatened to collapse.

This was the situation which the oukalas had reached, swept along by the lack of preservation and by neglect because the absence of their owners in some cases, or because of the extreme density of inhabitants in other cases, and also as a result of the law on tenants' right to remain and the rent freeze which was originally created to protect the weak.

The language used is strongly metaphorical: the implication is that a cancer is present in the old city, gradually destroying it. The Arabic terms used, *ist'isal*, 'removal by surgery' and *da'* (a more learned word for disease than *maradh*, illness), have strong scientific overtones. Although the oukalas have been 'swept along' by neglect, the situation can be treated, and the rest of the document will deal with how this took place.

The linguistic treatment of social actors in this extract is revelatory - if considered along with historical context. Three categories of social actors are mentioned, each preceded by a verbal noun:

⁴³ ASM (1995) *The Oukala Project: achievements and perspectives for the future*

taghayyub maliki-ha

'absence of their owners'

shiddat kathafat as-sukkan

'extreme density of residents'

i-himayat dhuafa' al-hala

'for the protection of the weak'

The collocation of noun plus social agent enables the writers to put forward reasons (in the first two cases) for the deterioration of housing. The construct, however, puts actual social agents into the background. The last paragraph of this extract is plausible if read rapidly. If read closely, it is obvious that extra-textual knowledge is essential for full comprehension. Why are owners absent (abandoning valuable city centre property)? Why are people living in overcrowded buildings? The Tunisian reader on the inside would realise that eastern Médina property was abandoned to property agents by departing Jewish Tunisians and Italians, while elsewhere in the Médina multi-ownership under the complex Muslim inheritance system reduces a willingness to invest in old, expensive to maintain shared property. The density of extremely poor families, people forced to accept overcrowded, unsafe housing because of the locational advantage of the city centre would provide more of an explanation than just 'density of residents'. And finally, there is the use of euphemistic parasynonyms: *dhua'f al-hal* makes the notion that it is poor people who are concerned somehow more remote; any negative social connotation is avoided. This opening to the report provides plausible reasons for housing deterioration - but the authors do not need to analyse the system any further (rural immigration, the commodification of housing, etc), as an operational programme is now underway.

Most of the rest of this report (12 pages) is taken up with a description of the various elements of the rehousing project. The language makes extensive use of verbal nouns, first person subject pronouns are avoided. Whereas in the introduction, the process of housing decay was presented as the result of states where human activity was backgrounded, here, in the main body of the text, the emphasis is on the performances of the operational programme and the results obtained. However, this is combined with references of a very explicitly political kind. I will now describe and analyse some of the main features of this particular discursive mix, focusing on a couple of extracts in detail.

The text is heavy with professional terms (rehabilitation, renewal, rehousing, collective facilities, intervention operations, additional costs of land preparation), which although not particularly technical, require a mastery of the concepts behind the terms. The usage

of these terms evidently implies an intended audience familiar with abstract terminology. The text is also extremely impersonal: apart from the occasional inclusive expert 'we' (*nadhkuru* - 'we should mention'), abstract nouns are verb subjects, although the Municipality does on a couple of occasions 'note with satisfaction'. The use of abstract nouns referring to the evolution of the built environment in the subject position has a distancing effect, making the decay and rebuilding of the city seem like the functioning of mechanisms:

The removal of 95 oukalas on the point of collapse means rescuing the inhabitants; the rehabilitation and repair of 560 oukalas, of which 322 oukalas call for urgent attention as regards their roofs, and 238 oukalas call for minor works.⁴⁴

or

The rehabilitation operations concern the oukalas and immeubles which it was decided to retain with a view to restoring them, considering that they form an important housing stock.⁴⁵

This extract, however, illustrates another textual feature which lightens the professional language: the use of metaphor. The limits of metaphorical language are apt to be fuzzy: here 'rescuing' and 'call for' are essentially old metaphors which go unnoticed. The authors also use other verbs normally employed for human agents: 'And this phase allowed the housing of 451 families'⁴⁶ instead of 451 families were rehoused in this phase, or 'this phase enjoyed the personal attention of His Excellency the President of the Republic'.⁴⁷

The occasional use of such metaphors 'improves' the text, as does the variation in terminology to describe those to be rehoused (practically the only area of lexis where there is room for variation). Those moved from the Médina are described as *shaghilin*

⁴⁴ *ibid* (note 43) p.2

⁴⁵ *ibid* (note 43) p.7

⁴⁶ *ibid* (note 43) p.2

⁴⁷ *ibid* (note 7) p.4

('those concerned'), families, *dhuwi ad-dakhl adh-dha'if* ('of low income' - one occurrence) and *dhu'af al-hal* ('weak of state' - two occurrences). This of course is euphemistic terminology - negative social connotations are not allowed to come in at any point in the 14 page review of the project.

It remains difficult, however, to understand a great deal of the project from the bald statements of uncommented figures presented in this document. Context - and more insider information are clearly essential here. The formal, professional language used by those drafting this text - clearly the acceptable way to write - means that opposition and difficulties cannot be discussed, no doubt making the writers' task simpler. As phases 1 and 2 were fully successful there can be no argument against the protected phase 3. The simple linguistic mechanics of this conventional report develop a convincing line of thought.

There is one area, however, where the business of setting out facts and figures becomes more complex: the texts is scattered with references to presidential attention. The next extract, from the report's conclusion, is a good example of politico-professional discursive mix:

During the inner cabinet meeting held on 29 March 1995, H.E. Excellency the President of the Republic ordered the taking of the following measures for the continuation of the execution of the Oukala Project and the implementation of the third phase and the provision of the necessary funding, which was to facilitate the building of 360 social housing units of the Agba-type for a total of 5,046,000 Dt in Sidi Hassine on municipal land of 8 ha for the rehousing of the families concerned by apartment buildings on the point of collapse, and building of collective facilities (schools, a kindergarten, and a market), the costs of which are estimated at 300,000 Dt, in addition to the continuation of the restoration and upgrading of the 404 buildings, the overall cost of which is estimated at 15,000,000 Dt.

If the Municipality notes with all pride and pleasure this avant-garde achievement, it also notes with every joy and satisfaction the positive feedback (lit: 'the good echo') and the far-reaching effect which this gain has had on the beneficiaries and also on public opinion which has responded in harmony to this avant-garde presidential civilisational and social project through the receptivity of private

investors to set up architectural and commercial projects on the site of the decayed buildings and oukalas, which thus bodes well and makes us confident in the destiny of the city of Tunis and the future of its sons.⁴⁸

The extract is severely impersonal in its discussion of the project: nominalisations abound (here underlined), individual and institutional agency are eliminated - apart from the Presidential figure. In the second paragraph, the conclusion to the text, the tone is almost purely political, with an inclusive 'we' drawing conclusions, (unsupported by figures), about the future of the city. The rehoused are here once more labelled as 'beneficiaries', and a new set of social actors appears, 'private investors' - who are also benefitting from the project, but are not seen as beneficiaries. But to do this would destroy the logic of the presidential decision to help the poor and raise questions about who else is helped by the project.

Impersonality of style, the creation of group categories and interest are of course an essential part of the mechanics of policy discourse. Here the important thing to note is the depersonalisation of people with acute housing needs and the way they are placed on the same lexical footing as another undifferentiated group, the private investors, who here, to my knowledge, make their first appearance in an oukala-related planning text.

This last sample seems to me representative of Tunisian planning discourse in the 1990s - and of how writers, perhaps pressed for time, can become trapped within the conventions of the discourse. Its stylistic characteristics should not lead us to ignore the interests involved, why a more informed, less simplistic version has not been produced.

There is, however, in the last paragraph, a hint of a new direction in this discursive formation - related, in part, I feel, to a new type of text which was appearing at the same time: expensively produced promotional material on the projects being undertaken in the Médina. How does the mechanics of this literature differ from the planning and housing reports? What explains the appearance of this new vehicle for local government discourse?

⁴⁸ *ibid* (note 43) p.14

5.2.5 Selling organisation and ideas: promotional documents

The period from 1990 onwards in Tunis was marked by the growth of the Municipality's public profile under Mayor M'hamed Ali Bouleymen, a French-trained economics graduate who has been able to carve out a career in local government alongside periods spent in posts of responsibility in central government.⁴⁹ The growth in municipal activity is reflected in the appearance of a new genre of local government publication, the glossy promotional brochure. Doubtless the Mayor and his team are aware of the large amount of public-relations material produced by local authorities in France, and although there is no municipal newsletter - what in France would be an essential part of the local *presse institutionnelle* - the 1990s have seen the Municipality, and in particular its urban conservation institution, produce a number of brochures. The Oukala Project, with its striking images of decayed buildings and playgrounds in new housing areas, is a favoured theme in this effort to communicate with the wider public. Perhaps two of the best examples of this new communication style are the 1995 brochure *Madinat Tunis: injazat al-baladiya, 1990-1995*⁵⁰ (*City of Tunis: achievements of the Municipality*) and the special colour supplement, *La Médina de Tunis, ville du patrimoine mondial*⁵¹, produced by the French architectural trade magazine, *Architecture méditerranéenne* for Tunis' year as Unesco regional cultural capital in 1997.

Injazat al-baladiya was produced in the run up to the 1995 local election campaign. Mayor Bouleymen and his team, all of the ruling RCD⁵² party, were extremely unlikely to lose these elections, given the fragmentary nature of Tunisian opposition parties. The document, produced on high-quality matt paper, elegantly designed with colour photographs of the main areas of municipal activity, is basically a statement of the achievements of M. Bouleymen's first full five years in office. Produced solely in Arabic, the document is aimed in part at potential Arab financial bodies, as well as at a

⁴⁹ M'hamed Ali Bouleymen was Secretary of State for Housing from 1988-1990, during his first mandate as Mayor of Tunis, (1985-1990). His connections with Paris have made him a prime candidate for the important job of Tunisian ambassador to Paris, for which close knowledge of the French capital and its élite is felt to be an essential qualification. Mayor Belkhodja, the interim-mayor while Bouleymen was at Housing, was little interested in the Médina and related issues. Bouleymen was re-elected in 1990 and again in 1995 to the presidency of the Municipality, on the ruling RCD party list.

⁵⁰ Municipality of Tunis (1995) *Madinat Tunis: injazat al-baladiya, 1990-1995*

⁵¹ *Architecture méditerranéenne* (1997) *La Médina de Tunis, ville du patrimoine mondial*

⁵² Rassemblement constitutionnel démocratique, ex-PSD, Parti socialiste destourien

local audience. The aim is to disseminate the Mayor's political stance, which is covered under a series of thematic headings, 'Hygiene and environmental concern', 'Towards achieving a cohesive urban fabric', 'Assuring a better future by relying on the pillars of the future', and so on. The rhetorical tone is not dissimilar to that of promotional documents produced by certain European city and regional governments. The audience, given the cost of producing this document, was in all likelihood fairly restricted.

The document opens with a photograph of the President of the Republic, plus accompanying quote from a speech to the regional governors. On page 3 is a lengthy introduction by the Mayor. The oukala issue is dealt with on pages 14-15 under the heading 'The rehabilitation of the oukalas and the monuments of the historic city: an avant-garde civilisational project'. Historic buildings are also dealt with again on page 27, in a section entitled 'Reviving heritage: reconciliation with the past, openness to the future'. The document concludes with a perspective view in watercolour of the elaborately decorated main hall of the new town hall building at the Kasbah, then at the project stage.⁵³

To return then to the opening quotation, printed in Maghrebi script⁵⁴ below the Presidential photograph:

Thus we promised ourselves in this new age that the service of the citizen would be our guide in all our efforts, national, regional and local. On many occasions we have highlighted the close link between regional administrative structures and citizens. Municipal councillors and all those cadres working in these structures are the closest people to the local situation; they have the best knowledge of the matters which preoccupy citizens, and they are best able to find appropriate

⁵³ The building, designed by MIT-trained Wassim Ben Mahmoud, architect of numerous state building projects in 1980s and 1990s in Tunisia, was finished in 1998. With the construction of the new town hall, the modernist Maison du Parti (architect: Olivier Clement Cacoub, a close friend of former President Bourguiba) can no longer be seen from the Place du Gouvernement, and will eventually become an annexe of the office new building. I cover the symbolism of the buildings of this area in a forthcoming paper, 'The Unseen Citadel: architecture, identity and public space at the Kasbah of Tunis'.

⁵⁴ Maghrebi script is now available on Arabic-language software. Since this technical development of the early 1990s, the characteristic rounded forms of *khat maghribi* are used to give a national / heritage touch to official documents. A similar, though much more widespread use of typescript for nationalist purposes was the use of Gothic script under the Nazi régime in Germany.

solutions within the framework of the projects scheduled and the possibilities available ...

(from the Presidential speech to the regular governors' seminar, 29 July 1992)

The document thus opens on a very formal note, with words from above addressed by a remote 'we', confirming that municipal councilors are indeed the best placed people to deal with citizens' concerns. The principle of serving the citizen guides the 'we' in question. The theme is very clear: 'we' wish to promote the work of the local authorities. But is the power relationship really that simple? Let us look at the language of the Mayor's forward to the publication, which opens with a Quranic quotation: 'Keep God's oath if (when) you swear an oath'.

The Mayor opens by acknowledging the confidence placed 'in us' (his team?) by the inhabitants of the capital 'who honoured us by giving us responsibility for the affairs of the city' with the blessing of the RCD on its 'list for the renewal of the Municipality's work'. Writes the Mayor:

Our aim has been to raise the level of services and undertake interventions and achieve more gains, as part of the qualitative change which we promised to effect so that the capital may become a city in which it is considered good to live, putting into action (lit: 'implementing') the concern of HE the President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Republic, President of the Rassemblement.⁵⁵

'We', the Mayor and his team, would seem to be addressing the electors. The forward continues with a list of the ambitious goals achieved through an action programme:

responsive to residents' concerns and aspirations, and accompanying the spirit of the age (sic) whilst conserving the historic heritage of which the capital can be proud, given that it can be considered one of the most important elements of the individual's essence, and society's identity, and a deepening of the elements of

⁵⁵ In the translation of this forward, I stay as close as possible to the original Arabic. I could of course have adapted the translation to bring it closer to the style of English currently acceptable in politico-promotional documents of this kind. I have preferred to keep the lexis used in the Arabic, i.e. 'gains', 'in the framework of', 'the New Age', as these are current across Tunisian politico-media discourse. The 'New Age' (written without capital letters in Arabic, which has no capitals), is the expression always used to designate the period since the current President took over in November 1987. For a fuller discussion, see above, sub-section 4.2.

belonging, highlighting the extent of the contribution which our city has made to human civilisation, thus assuring the reconciliation of the citizen with his (sic) environment.

The foreward continues with a list of the main areas of municipal intervention; stress is placed on the fact that the document will show how the projects completed reflect the 1990 election manifesto. The achievements are described as being the 'fruit of the municipal family's enthusiasm' and the cooperation between municipality, citizen, the media and various institutions. However,

duty calls for recognition of the generosity of *sahib al-fadhl* (lit: the generous one), HE Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Republic, in the realisation of these good results, which went beyond all expectations ... (the paragraph continues on similar lines)

The introduction concludes with a mention of the citizens' support and help to the Municipality, and how 'we' were able to benefit from the experience and opinions of various groups, including *rijal al-fikr wa ath-thaqafa* (lit: the men of thought and culture), engineers, architects and contractors. The final paragraph states that:

It is our deep belief that the new municipal council will continue with the same enthusiasm to achieve more of citizens' aspirations, realising the concerns of the local community in the context of the alternation of responsibility in order to create a more beautiful city, and a better environment in the framework of the favourable climate which the new age has provided for serious and constructive work.

I provide such extensive quotations from this forward because it seems to me highly representative of the State rhetoric produced in 1990s Tunisia, with its constant references to the presidential person and its cliché ridden vocabulary of achievement. (There are numerous synonyms for 'achieve' - *tahqiq*, *tajsim* (most often translated into French by the unlovely term *concrétisation*), *tawassul*, all generally used in the verbal noun form.

This text is clearly about restating, reinforcing, the importance of city government in Tunisia. Whether or not great gains were achieved on the ground is immaterial - note

that no mention is made of the Municipal budget. The text takes on its importance in discursive terms: local government objectives are presented, but in linguistic clothing that bears the mark of various systems of discourse. There is a clearly stated aim of improving services. However, this is set within references to presidential concern: the projects are realised in accordance with the wishes of the powers that be. And there is another related theme, that of Tunis as a city whose heritage (understand: built heritage) is to be preserved, as it is a component of identity. Absent, however, are references to reinforcing local democracy and accountability - although 'citizens' are referred to frequently. This introduction can be read as as a sort of reaction to the low-key, lacklustre image of Tunisian municipal services. In terms of State-local relations, there is no sense of decision making being decentred. The text, with its references to the President and heritage, is firmly situated within national discursive conventions.⁵⁶

The oukalas removed, a civilized urban setting reinforced

I move now to the pages concerning the multioccupancy issue, part of a section entitled 'Towards a cohesive urban fabric' which opens with a picture of the statue of Ibn Khaldoun, the mediaeval Arab scholar, referred to as 'a native of Tourbet El Bey in Tunis and founder of urban and civilisational sociology'.⁵⁷ The subtitle of this section is 'Achieving a civilized urban setting which befits our city as capital', and the section includes pages on the national programme for the rehabilitation of popular⁵⁸ neighbourhoods, the Oukala Project, traffic management, and public lighting.

The presentation of the Oukala Project opens as follows:

Rehabilitation of the oukalas

One of the most outstanding major projects which the Municipality has carried out is the Oukala Project. This is a human and social project which was executed thanks to the high concern which HE the President of the Republic has never

⁵⁶ These 'national discursive conventions' will be discussed much more fully on the basis of a press sample in sub-sections 5.4 ('Solidarity and the national symbolic environment') and 5.5 ('Building consensus and representing policy in the media') discussed below.

⁵⁷ *ibid* (note 50) p.11

⁵⁸ 'popular' (French *populaire*, Arabic *sha'abi*) in the sense low-income.

ceased to show towards the old city of Tunis and its inhabitants, especially the poorest of them, and thanks to his personal interest in removing all forms of deformation and deterioration which had lasted a long time for many properties and which had detracted from the heritage value and the aesthetic aspect in this Arab-Islamic city.

And this project had its starting point with the blessed surprise visit which HE the President of Republic undertook on 20 December 1990 to families living in the old city, with the result that His Excellency decided during an inner cabinet meeting held on 21 December 1990 on the rehousing of families concerned in oukalas in dangerous condition (lit: about to collapse) as soon as possible and the demolition of oukalas which were about to collapse and to build new constructions on their sites.⁵⁹

The piece continues with paragraphs giving the main dates and figures and also mentions the new home improvement loan programme. The piece concludes as follows, linking back into questions of heritage:

This glorious achievement (*maksab*, lit: gain) realised, for the first time in the history of Tunis, a dream which thousands of citizens living in collapsing buildings had been awaiting for years, to live in decent dwellings with all the elements of a decent life; [this great achievement] also brought about a reconsideration of the historic city, listed on the Unesco World Heritage List, by stopping the deterioration of its buildings and monuments, according to a well-designed plan based on the restoration of properties which still conserves their identity and rehabilitation, and renewal of buildings which had reached a considerable degree of deterioration and their re-use.⁶⁰

Again, this piece is representative of Tunisian political rhetoric, bringing together references to Arab-Muslim heritage, presidential concern for the deprived, and basic figures. The 'we' of the foreward has disappeared: this is an information piece which demonstrates how the Municipality has achieved two objectives (rehousing poor families

⁵⁹ *ibid* (note 50) p.14

⁶⁰ *ibid* (note 50) p.15

and saving the built fabric) in one go. The completions of this project clearly demarcates the Mayors's 1990-95 mandate from that of his predecessors under whom the oukala situation had remained unchanged. The text is not without its ambiguities, however.

Take, for example, questions of agency and causality. The project is clearly presented as being the result of presidential concern and decision. Implementing agencies are elided, including the ASM, the ARRU and the National Army; the Municipality completed two phases between 1991 and 1994 - 'with the personal interest of HE the President of the Republic who decided upon the third phase and authorised looking for the necessary finance for its execution, i.e. 21, 466,000 Dt. The text establishes an affinity between citizens and President through the description of a successful record with regard to sub-standard housing. The sense of drama is created by terms like 'surprise visit' and 'oukalas on the point of collapse' (two synonyms for this last image). The Municipality can put forward an effective operation - about which there can be no dissent, since it was the result of presidential decision and, in addition, enhanced Arab-Muslim heritage, the value of which is axiomatic.⁶¹

But beyond this clearly expressed causality, the text has a number of ambiguities. The inner cabinet meeting decided upon 'the demolition of dangerous oukalas and the construction of new buildings in their place' - by whom? Why rehouse outside the Médina then? The project ('this great gain') is presented as being 'the first time in the history of Tunis' that people in poor inner-urban housing are rehoused (which ignores the 1930s rehousing of the poorest members of the Jewish community *in situ* in the Hafsia and the low rise blocks built along the edge of the Médina in the early 1960s).

Perhaps more importantly, the question of just what Tunis residents can expect from the Municipality in terms of help with housing remains unclear. The extent of the Municipal budget, the contractors used - or was it a Municipal team? - go unmentioned. This text

⁶¹ The restoration of Médina heritage comes to the fore again in this document, *ibid* (note 2) p.27, in the section entitled 'Revival of Heritage: reconciliation with the past, openness to the future':

As part of rooting Tunisian identity and the Arab-Islamic identity and supporting the outward looking elements of civil society, actions which HE Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Republic has anchored firmly, the Municipality has taken numerous actions linked to the preservation of heritage and its *ihya* (revitalisation) and the reuse of different historic monuments so that they correspond to the needs of the age and highlight the participation of Tunisians in the building of human civilisation.

on 'an avant-garde civilisational project' remains silent on long term objectives. It refers to citizens (*muwatimun*) and residents (*mutasakimun*) interchangeably, but gives no indication of exactly who was eligible for this form of public help. The term 'electors' goes unused. Although late in this document there is a section entitled 'Popular participation strengthens feelings of belonging to the city', the section on the oukalas makes no mention of choice and participation in the rehousing exercise.

There is not space here to analyse all the texts in *Injazat al-baladiya*. However, to summarise, the Municipality under Mohamed Ali Bouleymen comes across as a visible, effective organisation in Tunis: it revives heritage, it achieves, undertakes an avant-garde project. Readers are briefed on the numerous actions undertaken to ensure that Tunis is a pleasant city to live in, worthy of its role as capital. The Oukala Project, displayed with the appropriate contrasting photographs, is part of this image of active local government. However, the nature of the power relationship, struggles for funds and spheres of responsibility go unmentioned in this particular discursive construction of a local political institution.

An artificial interview

Injazat al-baladiya was clearly produced for local consumption. In 1997, with Mayor Bouleymen duly re-elected, a special supplement to *Architecture méditerranéenne* was produced to present Tunis to a wider public. The aim of this large format (11.5cm x 16 cm) well-illustrated, 72 page document is clearly to project as positive image as possible of a 'world heritage city'. After the inevitable photographs of the President and accompanying quotation - convention in any Tunisian public document, but a little surprising in the context of a supplement to a French glossy trade magazine, albeit one devoted to Tunis - the brochure opens with a two page interview with the Mayor. Here again, the Oukala Project figures.

On the surface, the text is a straightforward interview of the question and answer kind frequently found in the French press, ostensibly quoting the actual words of the person interviewed. In practice, however, there is a complex (and ambiguous) intertextual fabric here, which, if examined closely, raises issues of who is actually responsible for what aspects of urban policy. If glanced over in passing, the reader can move on to the next part of the document with the impression that the Municipality has considerable powers. The text is elusive in more than one way, however.

The interview with the Mayor of Tunis is a rather uncomfortable discursive mix. It sketches out the main actions and projects executed by the authorities (*la puissance publique*), allows the Mayor to describe the main features which make Tunis a pleasant and attractive place (green areas, *amélioration de l'esthétique urbaine*, new town hall building), and after a brief description of the city as a 'model of Arab-Muslim urbanism conserved in its integrality', allows the Mayor to answer the question 'Are there solutions of the most deprived?' (French: *les plus démunis*). The Oukala Project is cited twice, once early on, once in the final answer with the mention 'thanks to the support of President Ben Ali'.

The interview thus brings together elements of quasi-academic historic analysis, municipal press release, planning report - and Tunisian State-speak. ('Major achievements have seen the light of day thanks to the initiative of President Ben Ali in order to increase the competitiveness and attractiveness of Tunis, Mediterranean, Arab and African capital, and to strengthen social cohesion').

The extent to which the Mayor is involved in or responsible for such projects is left opaque:

It is thus that major projects, which are called upon to change the face of the capital and produce a real urban change, are scheduled or being implemented.

or:

Urban development projects have been undertaken. We [should] mention, notably, the upgrading of the peripheral self-built neighbourhoods (*quartiers spontanés*), the so-called 'red belt' of Tunis - Jebel Lahmar, Mellassine and Sayyida Manoubia, along with the rehabilitation of the Hafsia area in the Médina of Tunis (Agha Khan Prize 1995).

When the Mayor talks about projects like this, however, the implementing agencies tend to go unmentioned, which leaves the actual extent of municipal influence open to interpretation. In the case of the second example just given, the improvement of the self-built areas was undertaken by the central State and the Municipality with World Bank, United States and Dutch funding. of various kinds. Later on in the text, the Mayor mentions that 'plots of serviced land are made available with a loan for the construction

of a dwelling core'. In fact, it is the ARRU, the Urban Renewal Agency, which produces this sort of land, mainly in the western areas of the city, much of which lies within the Ariana governorate, and hence outside the Tunis city limits.

The text is sprinkled with the metaphors characteristic of 'city government' literature produced in the 1990s. Although the Mayor does not actually talk of *un urbanisme à visage humain* ('urbanism with a human face') (q.v. Jean Tiberi, Mayor of Paris), most of the metaphorical references would not be out of place in French town promotional brochures:

Original metaphorical expression	English translation
<i>les <u>maîtres</u> du développement urbain</i>	'the <u>masters</u> of urban development'
<i>la '<u>ceinture rouge</u>' de Tunis</i>	'the " <u>red belt</u> " of Tunis' (metaphor normally used to refer to the communist voting suburbs around Paris intra-muros)
<i>la <u>reconquête</u> du centre ville</i>	'the <u>reconquest</u> of the city centre'
<i>malaise urbain</i>	'urban malaise' (not considered present in Tunis - the term usually refers to suburban estates with high crime rates in France)
<i>la <u>reconciliation</u> de Tunis avec son lac</i>	'the <u>reconciliation</u> of Tunis with its lake'
<i>l'animation des espaces publics, <u>miroirs</u> de la cité</i>	'the animation of public spaces, <u>mirrors</u> of the city'
<i>la construction du nouveau siège de la Municipalité ... dans <u>un endroit chargé d'histoire</u></i>	'the construction of the new seat of the Municipality ... in <u>a place charged with history</u> '

la ville de demain ... une ville plus solidaire 'tomorrow's city, a city of greater solidarity (the French Republican solidarity concept in the Tunisian context?)

le sauvetage des ménages locataires 'the rescue of tenant households' (The French *sauvetage* carries overtones of disaster)

Another lexical feature of this text is the frequent use of planning jargon, quite often metaphorical as well:

- *mutation urbaine* ('urban change')
- *requalification de la ville* ('reorganisation of the city?')
- *redynamisation* (bringing a new dynamism)
- *revalorisation du centre ville* ('enhancement of the city centre')
- *réussir une intégration majeure* ('to succeed in creating a significant integration')
- *espaces verts* ('green spaces')

While not particularly technical, these terms are not always precise in meaning in the context of this interview-article. Rather they lend an aura of technical expertise to the interview, helping create the feel that things are being done with a high degree of technical competence. There is of course no room to challenge what exactly 'green spaces' or *réqualification de la ville* might mean.

It would be interesting to know exactly how this piece was put together. The complex intertextual references and the impression that parts have been lifted from various expert reports make it unlikely as a real-live interview. Instead, the piece is important for its symbolic dimension at the beginning of a document devoted to projects and restoration in the old city. Tricky areas - of costs, extent of poor housing, participation in decision making, elections - go unmentioned in favour of a litany of achievements. This is a text which says the Municipality gets results, that the Mayor (with the support of the President of course) has effective power - an implication strengthened by the two photographs accompanying the interview (the Mayor at his desk, under a photograph of the President, and the scale model of the elaborate new town hall building). Although the interview format initially gives the text a feel of the lifeworld, this is soon dispelled by the jargon and dead metaphors.

'Un entretien avec M. Mohamed Ali Bouleymen', like the preceding extracts from *Injazat al-baladiya*, foregrounds ideas to promote the validity of Tunis local government in the mid-1990s: we are looking at a municipality working on ambitious projects, working to improve 'social cohesion', helping 'all social categories' (*les plus pauvres*, 'the poorest' of them are specifically designated), and aiming to create:

a city where it is good to live, a city of culture, and hence of dialogue, tolerance, a link between North and South, East and West.

These texts construct a moral relationship between governor and governed - a relationship which it is difficult to disagree with. The mix of features from various discursive systems illustrates the transfer of a new discursive form and its ideas to Tunis: the promotion of city government by marketing tactics. Strange as the combination may seem if compared to standard European urban marketing discourse, it nevertheless represents a new form of discourse practice, heavily dependent, however, on quoting actual real-life achievements - among which is the Oukala Project - to substantiate the claims of the text. The producers of these text types, like the writers of the planning reports, have a clear faith in the effectiveness of their products.

5.2.6 Beliefs into action: evaluating planner discourse on multioccupancy

What I refer to as 'technical text', i.e. the product of technically qualified professionals, can thus be read to reveal the mechanics of the authors' discursive strategies. The sample I have examined here, spaced over some 18 years, shows a clear shift in tone and content. The study of the linguistic form and substantive content, along with consideration of the socio-political context, demonstrates that these texts are vehicles of a professional ideology doing much more than present the objective data concerning an issue. This role of the institution becomes especially evident in the recent promotional literature produced by the Municipality of Tunis, directly or indirectly, in the 1990s.

The planning reports, based essentially on numerical data, frame the oukala issue, establishing a plausible narrative and achievable goals (in the 1990s) for the resolution of a problem concerning the population in sub-standard housing in inner Tunis. I have attempted to highlight the way in which the key knowledge on which action is based is

encoded in language. It seems to me that the main features which can be observed as having a considerable role are lexis, including jargon, and nominalisations.

At the risk of repetition, it seems useful - before moving on to media accounts of the Oukala Project - to summarise some of the key points arising from my analysis of this sample of professional discourse.

The very word which was adopted in the early 1970s to contain the concept of poor, overcrowded housing - *oukala* - and the related process noun - *oukalisierung* - are highly significant. British planning texts would use the term 'multioccupancy housing'. The equivalent in France would be *surdensification*. The notion of sub-standard residential accommodation would be dealt with by the terms 'unfit / unsafe housing' and *logement insalubre*. The terms *oukala* / *oukalisierung* fill the same semantic slot in French language planning reports. There is no equivalent in Arabic, where the phenomenon is referred to in terms of 'oukalas on the point of collapse' - not exactly the same meaning at all. The local French and Arabic term *oukala* is thus shorthand to cover the semantic field of poor, overcrowded private sector rented housing. The term has been in use with this connotation since the 1930s, spread perhaps by books such as Ryvel's *L'Enfant de l'oukala*.⁶² The term as used today spans the spoken and written languages used in Tunisia, with pejorative overtones in the former. In the planning reports it allows the professionals to evoke a problem - and avoid a more precise terminology which would raise the issue of housing standards and norms of habitability. Such a terminology would have a far wider application than the term *oukala*, which effectively limits the phenomenon to the Médina and carries a particular image of poverty, damp courtyards, and peeling walls in the imagination of many Tunisians - an image reinforced by recent feature films such as the award-winning *Soltane el Médina*.⁶³

The substantive content of the documents shifts from the earliest, French-authored report of 1970. In the early 1970s, the issue is being defined, studied in depth for the first time. There is only one detailed, lengthy study⁶⁴, produced at a time when the ASM had a large, well-funded multi-national and multi-disciplinary professional team. In the reports

⁶² Ryvel, alias Raphaël Lévy (1931/1981) *L'Enfant de l'oukala et autres contes du ghetto* Tunis: Ed Bouslama (republished 1981, Paris: J.-C.

□

⁶³ Dhouib, Moncef (1994) *Soltane el Médina* produced by Ahmed Attia Tunis: Ciné Télé

□

⁶⁴ ASM (1972) *Oukalisierung de la Médina de Tunis*

of the 1990s, the writers are content just to quote the simplest household figures in their prefaces.⁶⁵ The issue has been sufficiently 'counted', is the message: the documents of the 1990s describe action undertaken or shortly to be implemented.

The anonymous authors of these documents establish their professional identity in part through the creation of texts of this kind, and establish identities for groups of people and parts of the city. In the earlier texts, these groups are described with certain nuances and the nature of the housing stock and its occupation is very closely studied, with an analysis of average surface area per inhabitant. The later reports simplify considerably. Whereas in 1972, the writers distinguish between several forms of oukalisation, and establish different zones of oukalisation, in the 1990s the empirical description is limited to *ménages* (households) and 'houses on the point of collapse'.

The 1990s reports, however, are distinguished by new social actors being written into the oukala narrative - and new terminology for the categories already present. The oukala occupants are represented as *dhi'af al-hal* (lit. 'weak of state'), a term which is widespread in press discourse and political rhetoric. The euphemism avoids the more direct *fuqara*, 'the poor'. The President and his concern for this group are explicitly mentioned with phrases drawn from the same politico-media register. ('And following this blessed visit, His Excellency decided during an inner cabinet meeting ...'), and the Mayor (*shaykh Madinat Tunis*) is specifically mentioned as chair of the special oukala committee.

But it is in the parts of the text referring to future action that the contrast between the early 1970s and the present day is strongest. By 1995, two lots of inner urban residents had been rehoused, and a third phase was envisaged. Pragmatic action had been taken, and the authors of *Mashru' al-oukayil* can write:

Although the Municipality notes with pride and pleasure this avant-garde achievement, it also notes with great satisfaction and joy the favourable echo and the deep impression that this gain has had among the beneficiaries, and also on public opinion which has been in harmony with this civilisational and social presidential project, [especially] given the readiness of private investors to set up

⁶⁵ i.e. ASM (1995) *Mashru' al-oukayil: an-nata'ij wa afak al-mustaqbal*, p.1: 'The different surveys undertaken by the ASM since its creation in 1967 discovered around 15,000 residents, i.e. around 3,000 families living in and around 600 oukalas in the central Médina and the two suburbs'.

architectural and commercial projects for the sites of the oukalas and demolished buildings. This bodes well, and makes us confident with regard to the destiny of the city of Tunis and the future of its sons.

Note that this is the conclusion of a document entitled *The Oukala Project: results and future perspectives*. Consensus prevails and 'we' (the planners, or perhaps the Municipal Council?) are confident. The contrast with the conclusion of the 1972 *Oukalisation de la Médina de Tunis* could hardly be sharper: this document ends with questions, including a section entitled 'Should some of the inhabitants of the Médina be moved?'.⁶⁶ For the authors 'theoretically and given the availability of rooms and habitable surface area a better distribution of the population in the central Médina may be envisaged'.⁶⁷ One 'speculative approach' envisages that part of the Médina population, some 1,000 out of 5,144 households in multioccupancy dwellings, moving to new housing in the Hafsia.

The point to note, however, is that the planning of the 1970s, despite its basis in detailed research into the nature of overcrowding - even as detailed as the geographical origins of the inhabitants (Tunisois or immigrants) - did not lead to action. The authors of the 1972 report put different groups, possibilities for action into their writing. This is ironed out in the 1990s' reports, replaced by a text giving numbers of families to be rehoused, costs of rehousing, and the eventual future cleared sites and buildings of historic interest.

Could it be that the earlier reports were too tentative? The nature of the documents, as has been shown is different. The 1990s oukala reports are limited to stating what has been done, and what shall be done. But if, as a discourse analyst, I stand back from this tale of successful achievement, the later documents become interesting for their silences.

What the oukala budget represents in terms of overall Municipal spending is never mentioned. What proportion of the Médina's unsafe housing is being treated also goes unmentioned. These being documents which present actions accomplished, there is no discussion of how this clearance / rehousing strategy fits with wider housing and heritage policy. How is it then that the writers of the 1990s get away with reducing such a

⁶⁶ *ibid* (note 64) pp.102-104

⁶⁷ *ibid* (note 64) p.103

complex issue to a 14 page bald statement of numbers rehoused and costs incurred or projected.

Through the use of authoritative professional language and of references to presidential concern which top and tail the paragraphs stating figures, the later reports create a certain simple idea of the multioccupancy issue. The technical situation seems self-evident (rehousing in estates). The 1990s oukala documents are written essentially to communicate with politicians, to function as a statement of politico-technical consensus. Were they written for a better informed housing profession, the level of information would seem severely inadequate. Thus, although these documents provide a springboard for action, the process is a very traditional one: research has produced statistical information on which the politicians act, following professional advice. The 1990s reports are able to keep things clear and simple because there is no-one producing counter-arguments (or in a position to publicize them). It is at this point that knowledge of context becomes essential. Reports probably need not be more complex because they are not to be scrutinised by a pluralist town council. The Mayor of Tunis, from 1990 to the present, an ambitious and skilful operator in the heavily centralised political climate of the 'New Era', draws on a range of discursive systems to achieve his aims; one of these systems is professional rationality. In this context, the link between political authority to promote and implement action and language practice is clear. The planners in the 1970s produced numerous documents arguing that the fabric of the old city should be preserved. With time this line of argument has become broadly accepted among the Tunis élite.⁶⁸ In the 1990s, the preservation of the old city as a desirable objective could be taken as given. But the political context required the *sauvetage* of the poor families - hence the Oukala Project.

My analysis of this text corpus has focused on the mechanics of a particular discursive practice: the writing of professional planning and housing reports, with an additional look at some mid-1990s documents promoting urban policy - a new trend in Tunisian public rhetoric. Within their limits, the texts are consistent and coherent. Through extensive use of abstractions which remove grammatical agency⁶⁹, categorisation and euphemism⁷⁰,

⁶⁸ For a detailed discussion of this see McGuinness, Justin (1997) 'Political context and professional ideologies: French urban conservation planning transferred to the Médina of Tunis' in *Journal of North African Studies* 2,2 (autumn 1997), pp.34-56

⁶⁹ i.e. the almost untranslatable *assainissement de l'habitat*

the authors of these documents establish a consensualist view of the built fabric of the Médina. Appropriate action is clearly defined, intra-professional or political conflict is masked. Although these are texts put together by people with practical, hands-on experience, doubt is absent, consensus dominates. My analysis of this professional textual style thus raises questions related to policy delivery and political context - which I take up in the conclusion (chapter 7) under the heading 'Myth, hegemony and urban policy'.

For the moment, however, let us remain with the text corpora. Ultimately what struck me as I read through this artificial collection of texts in late 1997 was the point to which documents which treat vital issues for thousands of people - including the question of domestic location, and therefore access to facilities - are dry and in some cases barely readable. How might planners in this particular context have produced text which discusses the issues in some detail? Perhaps this is the role of the mass media - the subject of the next part of the chapter. Does the Tunisian press maintain a similar impersonal stance on the oukala issue - or are marginalised, dissenting voices able to express themselves?

⁷⁰ i.e. *classes modestes*, just one example among many.

5.3 The media expression of a neo-corporate housing policy

5.3.1 Introducing the press corpus

The everyday, the innocent and innocuous, mundane text is as ideologically saturated as a text which wears its ideological constitution overtly.⁷¹

The majority of the articles studied here came from six ‘serious’ newspapers, the French language *La Presse de Tunisie*, *Le Temps*, and *Le Renouveau*, and the Arabic language *Es-Sabah*, *Er-Ray El-‘Am* and *El Hurriya* (Freedom). Of these, *Le Renouveau* and *El Hurriya* are the official organs of the ruling Rassemblement constitutionnel démocratique (RCD). *La Presse de Tunisie* and *Es-Sabah*, (along with its French language twin paper *Le Temps*), are seen as serious papers, with *La Presse* being the most widely read French language daily. In addition to these newspapers, Tunisia also has a number of popular tabloid dailies – notably *Esh-Shurouk* and *El-‘Ilan*, whose main selling points are sports coverage and stories on the doings of top footballers and stars of Arab music, along with a dose of faits divers. Material is also occasionally drawn from the international French language weekly *Jeune Afrique*.⁷²

The newspapers represented here in my main corpus regularly publish news of government actions taken to improve living conditions – generally in the form of short official communiqué type articles. Coverage is irregular and is found, on the whole, when there is presidential interest for a phase of the project, i.e. eight articles between 13 and 15 October 1994 and five articles between 30 March and 1 April 1995. Occasionally, the same wording is repeated in several newspapers on the same day, thus belying the official press release source (see items from *Le Temps* and *La Presse de Tunisie* for 16 October 1995). However, the corpus also includes a few feature articles and editorials. The majority of items in the corpus are anonymous and I do not on the whole take the fact that articles are the work of individual columnists into consideration. As the subsequent analysis makes clear the articles share a clear, dominant world view. I do not, however,

⁷¹ Kress, G. (1993) *Language as Ideology* London : Routledge

⁷² The following abbreviations are sometimes used to refer to newspapers and magazines in the corpus (in French) : JA – Jeune Afrique ; N – Nuance ; P – La Presse ; Le Temps ; R – Réalités ; RN – Le Renouveau ; TH – Tunis Hebdo. In Arabic : H – El Hurriya ; RA – Er-Ray El-‘Am ; S – Es-Sabah ; ES – Es-Sabah El-‘Usbou’i ; Sh – Shurouk.

deal with the issue of the reception of the articles in the corpus how it is experienced by the target publics. (This might be dealt with in subsequent research).

In order to get at what I will 'the mechanics of representation' of the oukala policy, I continue to make use of a number of tools and techniques taken from critical discourse analysis. In this way, I hope to reach a fuller understanding of how a certain hegemonic, common-sense view is maintained. Much has been made of transitivity and lexicalisation in CDAm and in addition to these focus points, I allow other themes to emerge : agents and speakers, categorisation / stereotyping, coherence and association.

The aim of analysing the press corpus with the use of these tools is to see how a certain ideological position with regard to urban poverty and its resolution by the State is maintained and reinforced. Rather than work chronologically through the corpus, I have opted to present an overview of each 'theme', discussing the analytic tools used where and if necessary. Although the articles may be classified into four main sets – routine news (the vast majority), news and event features, background features, and editorials (see Table 1 below) – the techniques used for addressing the reader may be divided into two main types. The interest of this analysis therefore is to explore the workings of a particular form of public discourse, whom it calls into being and its silences, its resources and its public.

The category 'routine news' refers to the short three or four paragraph pieces featuring items of government policy found on the front pages of the main Tunisian newspapers. There is generally one item of presidential attention each day. This has been the tradition in the Tunisian press for many years now, well-established under former president Habib Bourguiba (1956-87). 'News and event features' refers to the longer, in-depth pieces, which may appear elsewhere in the paper, either on the front or home-news pages. The 'Background Features' category, here chiefly from the ruling party's Arabic newspaper *El-Houriya*, refers to longer investigative pieces researched in the field and using interview material.

The 'routine news item' (A) and the 'news and event features' (B) share a broadly similar style while the background feature articles are based heavily on short quotations from interviewees. The editorials, although they draw on elements from categories A and B, tend to adopt a much less factual tone, as might be expected. Examples of the main text types are quoted at length in the remainder of this chapter, with a couple of articles

reproduced in full. In my analysis of the press representations of policy and poverty, I make use of tables to present dominant lexical features. However, I also make use of extensive quotations from the articles so that linguistic features can be observed and discussed in context. The concluding part of this chapter, 5.6 ('Si Jelloul leaves the oukala'), goes beyond the thematic approach. In this sub-section, I attempt a more global analysis of the press production arising from one single incident related to the oukala storyline.

However, as a way into the press corpus, I begin with the techniques used to capture readers' attention, taking a look at the messages carried by headlines and images.

Table 1: Article types in the press corpus, classified by language and type

	A Routine news	B News event and features	C Background features	D Editorials	Total
Arabic	18	11	7	1	37
French	15	14	1	4	34
Total	33	25	8	5	71

5.3.2 Focusing attention: headlines and images

Attracting the attention of the Tunisian reader to the news pieces on the oukala issue are headlines which roughly fit into three main categories: figures and information, summary of event, and slogan / metaphor. The first category is by far the largest, including phrases such as 'Oukala Project: start of works soon on 400 homes in Sejoumi'⁷³ or 'The Oukalas in the capital: settlement of the situation of 87 families'.⁷⁴ Such headlines provide the vital figures, hopefully to lead the reader into a short report.

Much more interesting, however, is the language of the headlines for events and longer reports. Here the headline language is more evaluative and emotive, providing

⁷³ *Er-Ray El-'Am*, 4/1/96

⁷⁴ *Es-Sabah*, 16/11/93

condensed comment on an event (generally a presidential visit) or an investigative piece of writing. The headlines in this category tend to be brief and sometimes memorable:

Good news for the deprived - new housing project (*El Houriya*, 19/11/94)

Pride and Gratefulness (*La Presse*, 15/10/94)

Tunis in search of a human face (*Le Temps*, 28/07/95)

The "oukalas" on the steep slope (*Réalités*, 31/03/95)

Social cases ... solutions urgent and delayed (*El Houriya*, 15/05/95)

The promised estate (*La Presse*, 14/10/95)

The dream realised (*Le Renouveau*, 14/10/94)

Tunis, Oukala Project: all's well that end's well (*La Presse*, 30/10/94)

Generally, these headlines are accompanied by short, second-titles which give a better idea of article contents. Some headlines carry traces of clichés or discourse from elsewhere: 'The promised estate' echoes 'the promised land', while 'Tunis in search of a human face' is reminiscent of the public relations pitch of mid-1990s Paris mayor Jean Tiberi, promising *un urbanisme à visage humain*.

Some headlines specifically mention the President of the Republic in the secondary titles:

Supplying the essentials of life and more concern for the external environment of the estate.

Ben Ali on a surprise visit to the estate at El Agba [built] for the oukala inhabitants.

(*El Houriya*, 14/10/94)

Looking at circumstances in the area and the living conditions of its inhabitants

The President on a surprise visit to El Agba (*Er-Ray El-Am*, 14/10/94)

Here the secondary headline provides a gloss on the main headline and the accompanying image. The exact responsibilities for action in the main headline ('supplying' - *at-tawfir*, 'looking at' - *al-itla'*) are kept unspecific by the use of the verbal noun.

The images which accompany the event articles, all first page leader pieces, as is warranted by a presidential visit, show the President listening to / talking with the rehousees. On a number of occasions, an individual is whispering something into the President's ear. These visits to poor communities have become part of the leadership's characteristic symbolic presence (along with the surprise visits to enterprises and government offices, and speeches to large and loyal audiences at the Palace of Carthage and the Menzah Sports Dome). They provide an opportunity for the Presidency to display itself with a human face, interacting with the people. This public presence is portrayed as a simple, open link between a ruler who is accessible to the ruled. The directness of this visible contact does not come through in the headline language, however:

The Head of State visits the Social Guidance and Orientation Centre at Douar Hicher

Protect the specificity of the centre as a temporary shelter

- Preserve solidarity and family cohesion
- Deal with files quickly and ensure that they have sustainable solutions

(La Presse, 24/05/97)

This first page lead piece is accompanied by two photographs, situated under the headlines, of a boy embracing the President and an old man whispering something into his ear. (Only the woman is missing from this triptych of vulnerable figures: orphan, widow and old man). The text, however, gives only the slightest hint of what was actually said during the visit. In syntactic terms, the headline is based on the French infinitive of command or recommendation: *Sauvegarder ... préserver ... traiter ...* Agency remains unstated, although a possible implication is that these are the President's words. The infinitive form used in this way allows the newspaper to suggest that the President said the 'files are to be processed as quickly as possible ...' Recommendations like these would seem to be predictable from context and image.

Taking an example from inside the newspaper *El Houriya*, an investigative piece based on an interview with the head of the social services department dealing with the oukala residents is headlined thus:

- from the oukalas to the Khaled Ibn Walid Estate
- an important role is expected of the associations to help the residents

The inhabitants have been freed of the problems of underdevelopment and new ambitions have been born in them.

(El Houriya, 11/6/94)

In a collection of over seventy articles on the oukala issue, this is the only headline where the inhabitants figure as verbal subjects.⁷⁵ The sense, however, is passive and unspecific. Here both syntax and meaning maintain the rehoused people very much in their place as people who do not control their destiny. The use of this particular configuration of passive verbs, I would argue, actively participates in creating an image of a disciplined, malleable citizenry whose best interests are determined from above.

The language of the headlines is pure Tunisian officialese / newspeak of course. The images too, are characteristic of the official repertoire, as noted above. The point is that the images of the President in contact with the people are sufficiently rare as to break with the monotony of the front page formats of the 'serious' Tunisian dailies which almost always carry a small image of the President discussing with an official or the cabinet as the lead image. These photographs of the President meeting oukala residents (or others like them) exude the régime's confidence. Visits to new estates need to be foregrounded as examples of the work of a listening leader with a proven track record. They take on a fuller meaning in the newspapers when compared to events from elsewhere, also presented on the front page (strife and massacres in countries close by rather than remote).

However, the headlines in this news corpus, whether dry and informative or metaphorical and emotive, all have this much in common: they never detract from a central theme of effective government. There is no journalist producing headlines which could be seen to criticise the established order. (This already tells us much about what the critical reader might be trying to find). Through a combination of visual image, verbal cliché and officialese, the headline writers - no doubt the newspaper editors themselves - attempt to create interesting front pages within the limits of the established conventions - not always an easy task. By juxtaposing images of people and leader with elliptic phrases which

⁷⁵ The residents very rarely feature at all in the headlines. If they do, it is in a patient role:

- '... Food aid ... and other aid concerning the residents' (*El Houriya*, 13/05/95)
- '... to guarantee the dignity of the deprived' (*El Houriya*, 16/11/93)
- 'The President looks at the housing sector: 360 new homes for the oukala residents' *Ech-Chorouk*, 30/03/95)

attribute concern and action to a single person, the press creates a simple, strong representation of the 'natural' relationship between leader and people. The aim is to ensure a sense of shared destiny - as the editorial headlines point out: 'Solidarity in openness, (*La Presse*, 15/10/94), Ben Ali: support for those with no support, (*L'Observateur*, 17-23/5/95).

Thus in the attention-winning strategies deployed by these newspapers, we can see a well-established political institution defining its relationship to its constituency. 'Well-established', I suggest, because a more challenged institution might have felt the need to take on more recent forms of political communication. Two main social actors are visible. How then are they represented in terms of lexis within the actual texts?

5.3.3 Participants and places: lexicalisation and the oukala issue

To the foreign reader of the Tunisian press, it quickly becomes apparent that there is a fairly limited range of writing styles drawn upon for the reporting of public affairs and political events. The same words seem to recur again and again (I will comment on the main semantic fields of what I refer to as the Tunisian national symbolic environment in sub-section 5.4 below). Here I comment on the lexicalisation of the people and places involved in the oukala story, on the range of terms available and used to give meaning to these social agents and localities. The spread of possibilities to indicate deprived persons is wide - and as Halliday⁷⁶ notes, when an area is overlexicalised. '.... it is often a sign of a socially taboo or delicate area'. In this section, therefore, I will examine the sometimes elaborate taxonomies used for referring to people and places, bearing in mind that it is not enough to just extract important items, but that attention must eventually be paid to use in the surrounding text.

The President of the Republic is the most often mentioned figure in this corpus, and as such is referred to with a variety of terms, either by his full name (*le Président Zine el Abidine Ben Ali*), or by any one of the following honorifics:

⁷⁶ Halliday, M.A.K (1978) *Language as Social Semiotic* London: Arnold, pp.164-

Terms in French and Arabic ⁷⁷	Translation
Le Chef d'Etat / <i>ra'is ad-dawla</i>	Head of State
Le Président de la République	President of the Republic
Son excellence le Président / <i>siyadat ar-ra'is</i>	His Excellency the President
L'artisan du Changement / <i>sani' at-taghyir, sani' at-tahawwul</i>	The Artisan of the Change
L'artisan du 7 novembre / <i>sani' as-saba' min novembre</i>	The Artisan of the 7th November
L'Homme du Changement / <i>rajul at-taghyir</i>	The Man of the Change
Le parrain des pauvres (one instance only)	The sponsor of the poor

With regard to the rehousees, the main category of people dealt with in this corpus, there is a similar range of lexical items, many drawn from the language of the official, 'neutral' report:

⁷⁷ The range of official terms for referring to the President has been simplified since the presidency of Habib Bourguiba (1957-1987), whose preferred titles were *al-mujahid al-akbar / le Suprême Combattant* and *fakhamat ar-ra'is*, a higher sounding version of His Excellency the President.

Terms in French	Translation
<i>habitants des oukalas</i>	inhabitants of the oukalas
<i>bénéficiaires (du programme de relogement)</i>	beneficiaries
<i>familles relogées</i>	rehoused families
<i>familles de condition modeste</i>	modest families
<i>anciens locataires</i>	former tenants
<i>sans soutien familial</i>	without family support
<i>personnes âgées</i>	old people
<i>catégories sociales défavorisées</i>	underprivileged social categories
<i>les économiquement faibles</i>	the economically weak
<i>les démunis</i>	the dispossessed
<i>indigents (one instance only)</i>	the indigent
<i>laissés-pour-compte</i>	the forgotten
<i>familles à revenus limités (one instance only)</i>	low income families
<i>famille nombreuse (one instance only)</i>	large family
Terms in Arabic	Translation
<i>sukkan, mutasakinoun</i>	inhabitants
<i>muntafa'in</i>	beneficiaries
<i>dhu'afa al-hal</i>	lit. 'weak of state'
<i>bidoun as-sanad</i>	without support
<i>halat ijtima'iya</i>	social cases
<i>'ailat mu'awiza</i>	needy families
<i>'ailat faqira</i>	poor families
<i>'aila a'isha fi'l wadh al-mutaradiy</i>	family living in a deteriorating situation
<i>fiat ijtima'iya dhat ad-dakhl adh-dha'if</i>	low income social groups.

None of these terms used to describe the rehousees could be said to have a negative consonance. Many, notably those at the end of the Arabic list, belong to the register of sociological writing. The use of such terms in the press helps to construct a seemingly neutral, value-judgement free account of actions being taken with respect to these groups

lives. But as will be seen in chapter six, a very different set of terms is available in dialect to characterise this group.

Wordlists by themselves provide only very limited information. They become more interesting however when taken in the general linguistic context, when compared with other, non-written items of lexis available for the same or similar categories. At times semantic fields fail to overlap and translation becomes impossible. The wordlists for the formal press register also become more interesting when taken in comparison with the terms available in the language but never used to describe these categories.

The naming of place in this press sample is particularly revealing of the interplay between different languages and genres. As in cities everywhere, distinctive neighbourhoods acquire distinctive reputations - and status is also quite clear from urban form, not only from location - leading to the creation of a city hierarchy of areas and housing types. The following tables presents the main ways in which home and area are lexicalised:

Terms in French	Translation
<i>vieille ville</i>	old city
<i>la vieille Médina</i>	the old Médina
<i>cité</i>	estate
<i>logement</i>	housing; house (formal)

Terms in Arabic	Translation
<i>al-madina al-atiqa</i>	the old city
<i>buyout tatada'a</i>	collapsing houses
<i>hayy</i>	estate
<i>hayy Khalid Ibn Walid</i>	Khalid Ibn Walid Estate (named after great Arab general)
<i>hayy El Agba</i>	the El Agba estate
<i>sakan; maskan</i>	housing; house (formal)
<i>maskan la'ik</i>	appropriate housing
<i>al-bayt as-sa'id</i>	the happy home

The Tunisian dialect term *houma* (neighbourhood) figures nowhere - yet this is the term most often used by Tunisians to describe the localities where they live. The term *hayy* / *cité* ('estate') carries very different overtones. Whereas *hayy* implies social housing or a poor area, and often comes with the qualifier *sha'abi* / *populaire*, *houma*⁷⁸ carries a set of associations which imply close human contacts - for example, terms like *houma 'arbi*, untranslatable, but denoting an 'Arab' neighbourhood or one where people live in a 'traditional' way, and *awled el houma*, 'home boys', i.e. the male peer group in a neighbourhood. Note the following example from the corpus, where the upmarket areas are *quartiers*, whereas Tadhamen, a vast self-built housing area, remains a *hayy*, even in a French text:

... Quartiers El Manar, El Menzah (as many as you want), and Hayy Tadhamen are so many grafts towards which the populations make their way to settle, according to their means ...
from *Le Temps*, 28 July 1995

The oukala families are thus transferred to estates from the *vieille ville* / *al-madina al-atiqa*, sometimes referred to in French as *la Médina*. The original Arabic term means city, from the pre-colonial time when there was no *ville neuve*. Here the writers in Arabic are faced with a small semantic problem: the French *médina* has essentially positive

⁷⁸ *houma* carries strong cultural overtones. Médina residents ridicule the use of *hayy* to qualify an area in the old town, feeling that it brings the tone down. (oral communication)

connotations, going right back to nineteenth century Beaux-Arts views of the picturesque North African city; in Arabic, the term *madina* has to be qualified by the term *atiqa* (old, ancient) for it to denote the area where the oukalas are located. The positive values assigned to the historic built area in a European language have yet to be transferred to the closest equivalent local term. And in spoked Tunisian Arabic, neither term would be used: *el-bled el-'arbi*, (best translation: the 'traditional' town) would be used. Médina as heritage (rather than *el bled el-'arbi*, location of souks and poor housing for many) is a concept in the making in Tunisian Arabic.

A similar contrast between appropriate terms in press and spoken language occurs in the terms available for house / home. Tunisian Arabic uses *dar* to denote home, and by extension, the immediate family (*ed-dar la ba's?* - How's the family?) Formal media Arabic uses *maskan*, more rarely *bayt*⁷⁹; *sakan* is the equivalent of the French *logement* (housing). In the corpus, housing is always qualified as *adéquat / la'iq, munasib* (appropriate, fitting). Contrasting with these new, suitable dwellings are the oukalas, sometimes referred to as *buyout tatada'a / menaçant ruine* ('on the point of collapse'). The lexis of the press corpus thus sets up an opposition between oukala (undesirable) and new housing. The ambiguity of the Tunisian Arabic *dar*, at once a 'there' and a 'them', place and people, has no presence in the written form.

Thus in terms of the lexis available - or rather that used for places - the contrasts so essential to a good news story are maintained. I now continue the discussion of lexis with a look at participants - and the problem. The multioccupancy issue has a marked territorial dimension; it also involves constructs of social categories.

The President of the Republic is constantly mentioned in the corpus using a range of terms, the most common of which is *le Chef d'Etat / ra'is ad-dawla*. (In everyday usage, he is affectionately referred to as 'Ezzine'). His presence looms large in the lives of the oukala residents in these articles. For the residents too, there is a good range of terms, fourteen in French and ten in Arabic. They are never referred to as poor or excluded (*exclus*), only rarely as 'needy' (*nécessiteux / mu'awizoun*). One term which recurs frequently is *dhu'afa al-hal*, (lit. 'weak of state'), which I take to be the Arabic equivalent for the French *de condition modeste* ('of modest means'). This would appear to be a euphemism specific to the Tunisian press, and various native speaker informants felt that

⁷⁹ *bit*, the Tunisian Arabic form of *bayt*, means room.

it 'was used to avoid a Marxist terminology', that 'it was odd not to find the more technical *dhou ad-dakhl al-mahdoud* ('low income people') more frequently used.

The other point of note in this lexical group is the very direct use of the term 'social cases', notably in articles referring to the Municipal social services. In one part of the corpus, euphemism is the order of discourse, in another, blunt administrative classification is fair enough. In both cases, the use of the term is based on a similar notion: the outgroup as a deserving group of individuals and families to be helped.

To broaden the understanding of how lexis constructs the issue, it becomes necessary to look at the outgroup terms with their collocates (or terms frequently used with them). Prior to this, I wish to take a quick look at some of the place and participant terms found in two European language poverty discourses which never find direct semantic equivalents in this Tunisian media / policy discourse on a aspect of deprivation. The poor are never named as victims (of the changing labour market conditions) or as a dangerous group; they are never categorised as an underclass, or as a deprived community or as a ghetto group. Sub-groups (single mothers, lone parents) particularly vulnerable to poverty are never named. Nor does the term social exclusion (a mid-1990s import to British English from European policy discourses) feature. In short, the Anglo-American terms used for categorising and framing the public discourse on deprivation are largely absent. There follows a short list of some of the more salient items of the Tunisian terminology used in this field as they occur in context. *Les habitants des oukalas / sukkān el-oukayil* is by far the most common expression; in terms of abstract vocabulary, *le concerne / al-'inaya*, and synonyms are frequent.

Terms for rehousee group in context

(key participants and abstracts underlined)

- ... the 402 families taken from the oukalas, removed from precarious housing (*La Presse* 15/11/94)
- The saving of families living in oukalas (*Esh-Shorouk*, 5/6/96)
- We saw on the television, both in the joy of the beneficiaries of the El Agba housing project and the size of the needs of these citizens reborn to life (*Le Temps*, 15/10/94)

- ... the President of the Republic went to see the housing at El Agba and learned about the living conditions of these needy families (*La Presse*, 30/10/94)
- In a single room lived a large family ... The Presidential decision to rehouse these families came at the right moment to save human lives (*La Presse*, 7/6/96)

The rehousees are mainly referred to as families, to be saved from a deteriorating built fabric; they are never referred to as poor or excluded, except in one report in *La Presse* (30/10/94) which qualifies them as needy (... *cette population nécessiteuse; familles nécessiteuses*).

The other frequent term for the oukala residents, *dhu'afa al-hal*, (of modest condition), occurs chiefly in the Arabic reports.

- The Head of State is intent (*haris*) on guaranteeing the dignity of the *dhu'afa al-hal* (*El Houriya*, 16/11/93)
- ... M. Kallal, minister of the Interior, expressed how honoured he was to attend this ceremony for what it represented as a symbol of the concern of President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali for the *dhu'afa al hal* and his intention to guarantee their dignity (*El Houriya*, 16/11/93)
- (these houses) ... saved [866 families] from the precarious situation in which they were living before the noble gesture of the President of the Republic embraced them (*Er-Rai El-'Am*, 2/3/96)

The category *dhu'afa al-hal* / *de condition modeste* collocates with terms expressing concern (*hars*, adj. *haris*) and also the abstract noun dignity (*karama*). We are thus a long way from any expression of the oukala population as victims of social exclusion.

This analysis of the context of the most common lexical items used to describe the beneficiaries of the Oukala Project gives a clear indication of the personal, moral conception underlying this poverty discourse. In some of the editorials, the participants featured include 'citizens' and 'Tunisians':

- We saw on the television, both in the joy of the beneficiaries of the El Agba housing project and the size of the needs of these citizens reborn to life (*Le Temps*, 15/10/94)
- ... there is still a way to go ... to eradicate poverty and give all Tunisians, wherever they may be, the means to live in dignity (*Le Temps*, 15/10/94)

A number of recent writers on discourse analysis, most notably Stubbs⁸⁰, have advocated the use of informatics to produce models of frequently occurring linguistic patterning. This particular description of lexical usage as it relates to places, and more particularly participants, is limited to an extent in that it is based on my own reading and intuition. Ideally I would have undertaken a computer-assisted analysis of the collocates of participant descriptors. However, given the size and nature of the corpus (70 items), I feel my reading does reveal the most frequent lexical choices. The paradigm of deprivation present in these texts is one which is ultimately based on solidarity - hardly surprising given the French republican traditions of the Tunisian State - and, at another level, Islamic allegiance, the *bay'a* or oath which tied the peoples of a Muslim society to their ruler.

The categories available and their abstract collocates reveal a particularly conservative definition of deprivation. I would suggest that underlying this display of 'concern' (*hars*, *ihitimam*, *'inaya*) for a social group lies in an almost patriarchal definition of a relation based on the obligation between ruler and ruled; we can observe the wise distribution of a material good to maintain dignity (*karama*). The modern, national categories of 'citizens' and 'Tunisians' are mentioned, but the modernity of this discourse on poverty is actually more problematic.

Thus as Firth⁸¹ maintained:

the complete meaning of a word is always contextual, and no study of meaning apart from a complete context can be taken seriously.⁸²

⁸⁰ Stubbs, M. (1996) *Text and Corpus Analysis* Oxford: Blackwell

⁸¹ Firth, J.R. (1937) 'The technique of semantics' in *Transactions of the Philological Society*, pp.36-72, p.37

⁸² It would clearly be interesting to observe the evolution in the usage of terms like *médina* and *dhu'afa al-hal* over the next few years.

I now move from lexis and lexical patterning to another form of linguistic mechanism, that of agency and action, to explore the nature of the ideology conveyed in verbs and their subjects.

5.3.4 Agents and action: a concerned leader and grateful inhabitants

The oukala articles thus display a limited classification system for human agents which contrasts a named individual in a position of authority and the mass of 'beneficiaries' / 'residents' / 'cases' and so on, undifferentiated group members – as does the policy discourse analysed previously. In a few articles, those responsible for dealing with oukala residents, named experts, feature too. Following this exercise in lexical categorisation, I move to examine the positions of these social actors in clause structure. What sorts of actions do they undertake? My aim here is to see how this might play a role in maintaining a dominant ideological position.

To see what sort of norms are established, I focus on extracts from the different text types - short quotations, longer extracts from a major expository article, and a presentation of a whole editorial piece with agency marked up. This approach can be justified in the basis of the extremely formulaic, repetitive nature of the vast majority of the articles. In terms of syntax, I focus on participants and the processes and actions they are involved in. Among the participants undiscussed so far is the editorial 'we', a 'we' frequently found, in the last extract below, a pronoun implying identification of readership and newspaper.

The examples I focus on are the report of a Presidential visit to Douar Hicher in *La Presse* (24/05/1997), an investigation of the project from *Es-Sabah* (25/10/1994), and an editorial piece from *L'Observateur* (20/05/1995). The article 'Sauvegarde la spécificité du centre en tant qu'abri provisoire' ('Protect the Centre's particularity as a provisional shelter'), is typical of the short, first page pieces which describe a presidential visit to a new piece of infrastructure - in this case, a 'social protection' centre in Douar Hicher, located close to the first oukala estate (although the report does not supply us with this piece of information). An examination of the nouns in subject position is revelatory: the President is subject of a series of action and mental state verbs, he 'made a visit' to a centre 'the creation of which he ordered', 'he paid attention to ...', 'met' people (*les intéressés*) there, 'enquired about their conditions ... noting, ... showing interest in', and he 'insisted on the need to ...' All in all, the President is subject of nine verbs. The subjects

of the remaining verbs are the institution (two cases), its mission (one case), and those in the centre (one occasion) - here with a negative meaning ('the difficulties which they meet ...').

A number of constructions in the text are used to remove of human agency. The use of noun phrase plus infinitive, a form of ellipse allows the writer to note action while short-circuiting the question of agency, i.e.

... dans l'attente de trouver les solutions adéquates aux intéressés
(lit: 'while waiting to find the right sort of solutions for those concerned');

... en attendant de leur trouver les solutions appropriées
(lit: 'while waiting to find the appropriate solutions').

Another construction which permits writers to be economical with agency is used, namely the French imperative infinitive, here found in the headlines:

Préserver la solidarité et la cohésion familiale
(lit: 'Preserving solidarity and family cohesion')

Traiter les dossiers avec célérité et veiller à garantir des solutions durables
(lit: 'Treating the cases with speed and making certain of guaranteeing lasting solutions')

A reading of the text reveals these to be presidential instructions. Presumably the Social Guidance Centre (whose exact role is never mentioned) is to undertake these tasks. A further construction which distances agency is the infinitive as object:

Le Président a insisté sur la nécessité ... d'en préserver la mission fondamentale
(lit: 'The President underlined the need ... to preserve the basic mission [of the Centre]')

Again, who actually will deal with preserving the 'fundamental mission' is unclear.

This sort of writing style permits the journalist to cover an issue without actually raising any contentious aspects. People are maintained as passive recipients, never able to take

the initiative. How these people are active, why they are in a 'Centre for Social Guidance and Orientation' is not actually evoked. This is a matter of choice regarding what it is appropriate to mention when a presidential visit is being written up for press consumption. The question is: Could social agents in a text mentioning the President actually be foregrounded in another?

But this visit, and many others like them, are signals of a highly political nature, and a Fowler notes:

Politics and the law, which provide a substantial amount of newspapers' copy, rely heavily on verbal actions and verbal processes for their operation.⁸³

I turn now to a piece of erstwhile investigatory journalism about the Oukala Project. Focusing on social issues, the article from the Arabic language daily *Es-Sabah*, is entitled 'After the construction of homes and the basic infrastructure come the green spaces'. A similar, though more complex agent pattern is revealed, this time contrasting the named experts with the anonymous citizen group. I begin with an extract subtitled 'New Life'. Once more in these and the following translations I try to stay as close to the written Arabic formulation as far as English usage will allow. Key subjects are underlined, verbs commented are in italics:

It is fine that there *should be* an acceleration in grasping the danger before its falling on the heads of residents in the oukalas, and the initiative of removing them from what are barely buildings before the execution of the demolition order. But better than this is that thought *has been given* to the use of the space after the demolition or to the reuse of the building for other uses related to public interest.

Thus the question *imposes* itself as to the ownership of these oukalas after their demolition and the method of using the spaces. Mme Sémia Akrouit Yaïche, director of the ASM de Tunis, *answered* that new life for these oukalas was possible and that there were people whose acquisition of them form the original owners *was completed* after payment for the services which the Municipality of Tunis *has undertaken* and they (the new owners) *were undertaking* the rebuilding of them according to the development regulations.

⁸³ Fowler, R. (1991) *Language in the News* London: Routledge,

And there are some buildings of architectural and historic value which *were used* in one way or another as oukalas, whose restoration and reuse *has been completed*. Among these, there is Borj Bsili at Bab El Khadhra. This building threatened to collapse and the emptying of it of its inhabitants *was completed* along with its restoration by the ANEP.⁸⁴

This extract, from early on in the article, combines journalistic and professional voices in a discussion of the process at work in the built fabric, post-demolition. The language is impersonal, close in style to that of a report. The first paragraph evaluates the current situation ('It is fine that ... it is still better that ...'), but the institution or persons evaluating are unstated (a journalist? architect?). This impersonality is heightened by the syntax of the clauses: 'there should be an acceleration in grasping the danger ... and in the initiative' (lit: 'that the speeding up takes place in ...'); 'thought has been given ...' (lit: 'that the thought has taken place ...'). The material process verb 'think' is here in the subject position, as a verbal noun (*al-tafkir*), as is 'acceleration' (*al-isra*). The structure allows elision of agents responsible.

A similar economy of syntactic means prevails in the rest of this extract. A named professional answers questions about the aftermath of the project in the Médina, but other actors remain opaque: 'there were people who had completed acquisitions ...', 'there are people who are undertaking rebuilding ...'. This preference for avoiding specific detail about social actors can be seen further on in the phrase 'oukalas used in one way or another'. In fact, in this extract, through metaphorical language, the buildings acquire human agency through the use of images common to the architectural profession: 'new life for these oukalas was possible' and 'this borj threatened to collapse'.

We have a clear instance of inter-discursivity, where the journalist, presumably aiming to communicate an interesting story to a wider population, remains bound by the conventions of a professional discursive formation in which human agency tends to be deleted and in which impersonal constructions abound. Was this a deliberate choice? Was the information not given about the type of people reinvesting in the Médina? The reader cannot tell, and is left with an impression of action and change.

⁸⁴ Agence nationale pour l'exploitation du patrimoine, created 1988.

I now go back to a later point in the same article, a sub-section entitled 'Unemployment' where the idea that there were problems for the new residents appears faintly:

At the forefront (of concern) of the social situations (*al-awdha' al-ijtima'iya*) from which the inhabitants of the oukalas suffered after their move and even before it, comes unemployment, and this is what spurred the social welfare department to turn attention to an **attempt** to set up a way out for some of the circumstances by **enabling** them to benefit⁸⁵ from certain programmes like the Productive Family Programme and subsequently **enabling the creation** of revenue generating projects⁸⁶ for some families.

Alongside the **provision** of stable social benefit for a number of residents, and especially the aged and handicapped, and **intervention** with guidance and **offering** a helping hand according to the possibilities available, to some social cases, and **considering** the social circumstances prevailing in the Douar Hicher area and the **tendency** of many residents of the area towards unemployment, Mme Hamdan proposed the creation of a weekly souk in an area of this estate on account of the movement it adds and for the work opportunities it creates for the unemployed who used to engage in trade⁸⁷ in their former areas.

The impersonal voice is maintained in this extract in language not dissimilar to that of the planning reports (see 5.2). The distance from the problems is maintained in categorisation (social circumstances, residents, families), while no exact details are given. The extensive use of verbal nouns (here given in bold) removes direct agency. I have underlined subjects, and it can be seen that the majority are inanimate (souk, projects, unemployment, social welfare department); where residents are subjects the semantic charge is negative and opaque - these people 'suffer from' social circumstances. They are also the complement of the verbal noun *jumuh*, 'tendency', which also carries a strong negative meaning: the phrase *wa jumuh al-adid min sukkan al-hayy ila al-bitala* (lit: 'the

□

⁸⁵ *tamkini-him min al-istifada min* lit: 'their enablement to benefiting from' (two verbal nouns, one transposed to infinitive form in English translation)

⁸⁶ *tamkin ba'th mashari tuwafiru mawarid rizk* lit: 'enablement of the creation of projects which will supply sources of livelihood' (two verbal nouns - English translation requires a different formulation)

⁸⁷ *sabaqa lahum at-ta'ati lit-tijara* - lit: 'it preceded to them engaging in trade' (verbal noun as subject).

tendency of many of the area's inhabitants towards unemployment') is a strong value judgement of the residents. The Arabic term *jumuh* carries the suggestion that the residents actually prefer to be unoccupied. It may be that the journalist used the term as an equivalent for 'trend' rather than 'leanings to'. The resulting phrase, however, is ambiguous.

The important point emerging from the second paragraph here is how the writer in Arabic can easily pile up a series of sub-clauses, each based on a verbal noun, which effectively place different forms of agency on the same basis. Whether a single or several institutions and person(s) are doing the providing, intervening, offering and considering does not have to be clear in this syntactic formulation. There is a final point concerning the verb 'proposed' (*iqtarahat*). The form used is the *madhi* or complete form. The journalist does not make explicit whether the proposal for a souk was a suggestion made during the course of the interview by way of an example, or whether it was a suggestion made at some point in the past to a given body. Here, where agency is clear, the information is insufficient.

In conclusion, the extract is interesting for its strengthening of the passive positioning of the rehoused. Nothing is specific however - nothing is said which would commit the social welfare services to certain undertakings, no figures are given. The use of verbal nouns and the verbal subject distribution would seem to reinforce the imbalance of power in the representation. Residents do not take action: they are kept firmly in a passive position.

The extract also hints that all is not right - but responsibilities are masked. A few lines later, the unease emerges more clearly. The social worker explains that after the move:

If some continued their normal lives without any problems in a natural way, some individuals, on the other hand, were unable to get rid of some of their old habits and of course for cases like these nothing is any use except opening the door of dialogue without constraints or pressure and listening to their concerns and attempting to resolve them with kindness by using the methods of invitation and not intimidation.

There is a very clear instance of verbal process taking the subject position in the second part of this extract. The translation remains as close as possible to the original Arabic. A

more subtle translation would have taken into account the journalistic conventions of English. Where an English language writer would have opted for the real-world example, the Tunisian media text moves to a main clause where verbal nouns take the subject role, thus allowing agent deletion. Who exactly might listen and dialogue is not clear - as is the case of the potential agents of invitation and intimidation. (Here the English is able to keep the rhyme and alliteration of the Arabic *targhib* and *tarhib*). In all likelihood an English language writer in a freer press context would have been able to investigate the issue more fully and present findings. Here our writer - because of an understanding of the limits to press expression - can only tell us that 'individuals were unable to leave behind some of their old habits'. The section of the rehoused people here are active - but lexis makes the meaning opaque.

I conclude my exploration of agency in this article with a further extract, this time focusing on the municipal role:

Among the new situations which the requirements of life in a new space imposed, are matters which relate to transport problems. The municipal services intervened to this effect with a participation in the provision of school transport subscriptions for a number of pupils of lycées along with covering part of the electricity and water bill charges and providing assistance for the opening of small commercial projects, in addition to guaranteeing social guidance according to the categories of social cases present.

The language in this final paragraph of the article is institutional rather than journalistic, highly impersonal with a preference for verbal nouns and catch-all terms to describe groups of people. Human agency is minimalised: 'the requirements of life', *muqtadhayat al-'ish* have given rise to transport needs - not the need to make money in an area of high unemployment. 'The municipal services intervened ...' in a number of ways: whether this means they provided assistance directly or put pressure on public service providers is another matter. No figures are given.

I feel that the analysis of extracts like these reveal the difficulty of separating writer standpoint from agency and vocabulary in an expository text like 'After the construction of homes and infrastructure come the green spaces'. In the first article analysed ('Conserving the specificity of the Centre ...'), where the Head of State is an active agent in almost all verbs, agency is easily distinguished, standpoint is self-evident. In the

second article I have sampled for agency, the writer, on the basis of interviews, has to develop an exposition of the project in order to promote its strong points. (It should be noted that *Es-Sabah* has a reputation of being a mildly critical newspaper on occasion). Certain problems were obviously mentioned during the discussion with the experts - rebuilding in the Médina, transport, unemployment - yet these melt away in the language of the article. The journalist can only hint at them and point to the effects made to resolve things. Linguistic choices, notably in terms of lexis for agents and agent positioning / deletion through the use of verbal nouns, operate to distance the text - and therefore the reader - from the life world. There is a substantive choice too: rehoused families can never be mentioned as active agents putting pressure on the Municipality, lobbying officers in institutions to gain a better share of resources. They are merely passive recipients of centrally distributed largesse.

In an article in the 1985 *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, Fowler⁸⁸ stresses that '... the major part of linguistic structure can be explained as responding to the needs of the society that used the language - including, most importantly, the ideological needs ...'. In my examination of agency, I now turn to a sample editorial, probably the most overtly ideological of the press text types.

I have opted to examine in full an editorial comment piece from *L'Observateur* magazine. Editorial language and approaches are also examined later in 5.4 ('Solidarity and the national symbolic environment'). This particular piece comes from a set of articles about the demolition of specific oukala - again, examined below in 5.6, 'Si Jelloul leaves the oukala'. Here my focus is on operation of agency, although I feel that other features cannot be ignored, including image accompanying the text. A full translation follows on the next page, while below is a reproduction of the article:

⁸⁸ Fowler, R. (1985) 'Power' in Teun van Dijk (ed) *Handbook of Discourse Analysis* vol. 4 London: Academic Press

رهافة الإصغاء.. ونجاعة الحسم



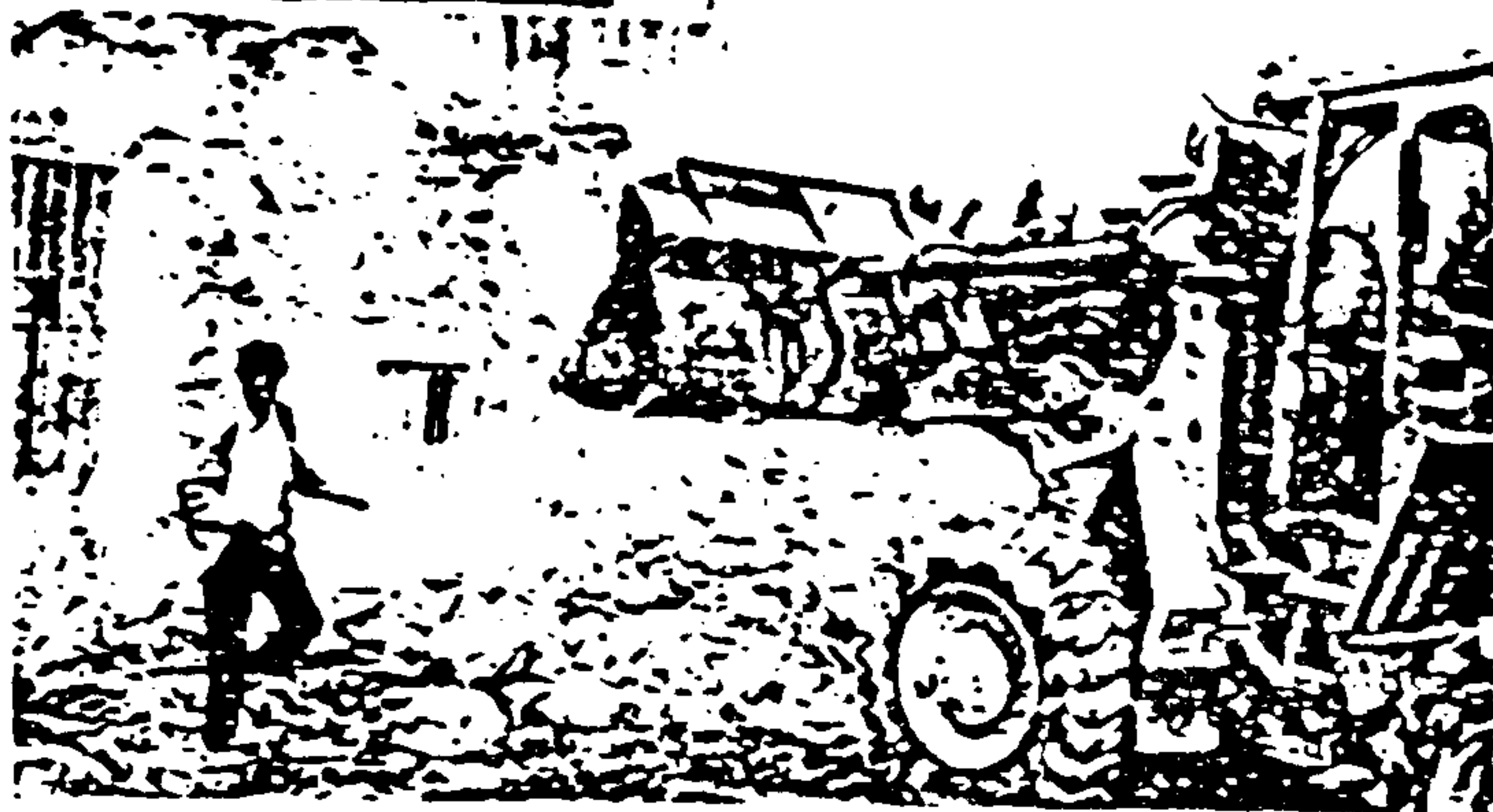
الخير والإيثار والأخذ بأيدي
ضعاف الحال.

فهل يعقل - مثمنا لاحظ
ذلك سيادة الرئيس في غاية
الاندهاش - أن تظل هذه
العائلات في انتظار مساكن
لائقة منذ فيضانات سنة
1969

وهل يعقل - مثمنا لاحظ
ذلك أيضا سيادة الرئيس - أن
تقع مطالبه المواطن المريض،

بنت القناة 7 مساء الأربعاء
الماضي، في أخبار الثامنة مساء
لقطات من الزيارة التي أداها
الرئيس زين العابدين بن علي
يوم عيد الأضحى إلى وكالة
برج بولحية حيث عاين سيادة
الرئيس الأوضاع البائسة التي
كان عليها سكان هذه الوكالة
المزدحمة والتي كانت تنذر فعلا
بالانهيار على متساكنيها. فكان
قرار سيادة الرئيس الفوري
بتهدم هذه الوكالة في أقرب
الآجال وتمكين العائلات من
مساكن جديدة لائقة، وهو ما
تم فعلا، في ظرف ثلاثة أيام
فقط، حتى أن بعض السكان
صرخوا بأنهم لم يتمكنوا من
استيعاب ما حصل وهم يرون
الحلم الذي طالما راودهم
ينحرق بين عشية وضحاها.

لقد صنع الرئيس زين
العابدين بن علي الحدث، في يوم
راحلة كان فيه الجميع
منسلما لأجواء العيد، فإذا
برئيس الدولة يختار كمادته أن
يقضي العيد مع بعض من
حرمته ظروف الدهر من أن
ينعموا بكل مقومات الحياة،
وإذا بالتونسيين والتونسيات
يتفاعلون كل التفاعل مع
الشاهد التي بثتها التلفزة،
ويتابعون باهتمام وتأثر، ما
دار من حديث بين الرئيس زين
العابدين بن علي ومتساكني
الوكالة، مكبرين مرة أخرى
رهافة حسن سيادة الرئيس
واصفاءه لشواغل التونسيين
بمختلف شرائحهم وفئاتهم،
واستيعاب الاشكاليات
المضروحة، والبت والحسم
لفائدة المنطق السليم، وقيم



كما تابعنا مشاهد عن الساكن
الجديدة التي وضعت على ذمة
العائلات التي كانت تقطن برج
بولحية، وأحاديث مع بعض
السكان.

وفي الواقع، فإن ملامحهم
كانت تفني عن كل حديث...
فلقد رايناهم ينتقلون بين
أرجاء مساكنهم الجديدة،
بخطى غير الخطى المتثاقلة التي
كانت تجرهم أو يجرونها على
مر سنوات العرمان
والخصاصة.

وكسان من الطبيعي أن
نستمع الى أكثر من متساكن
وهو يقول إنه لم يستوعب ما
جرى... وكيف يمكن استيعاب
فرحة بهذا الحجم، تحققت في
ساعات معدودات...

إن الرئيس زين العابدين بن
علي، عندما شدد يوم عيد
الأضحى، على ضرورة أن تتم
العملية كلها قبل يوم الاثنين،
إنما أراد بلا شك أن يؤكد على
أهمية عامل الزمن، فما دامت
العزيمة متوقفة، والارادة
ثابتة، والاهداف محددة، فلا
مجال للتراخي.

• محمد علي الحباشي

الزيارة - أن يتصوروا أن
هناك مناطق مثلها وأن هناك
تونسيتين وتونسيات، كانوا
يعيشون في تلك الظروف
القاسية البائسة والتي لم يبق
منها سوى الصور التي ظلت
راسخة في الأذهان، بعدما أمكن
- بفضل تدخلات صندوق
النضامن الوطني 26/26 -
تطوير الظروف المعيشية
لسكان تلك المنطقة وعديد
مناطق النزل الأخرى التي يعمل
الرئيس زين العابدين بن علي
جاهدا على القضاء عليها كلها
مع مطلع القرن الجديد.

وبعد ثلاثة أيام فقط، تابعنا
في أخبار الثامنة، مساء الأحد
الماضي، مشاهد عن عملية هدم
حي برج بولحية الذي
سيتحول الى منطقة خضراء،

ببطاقة في مجانية العلاج، وهو
الذي يمثل في حد ذاته بطاقة
علاج.

وهل يعقل أن يواصل ذلك
الشيخ الكفيف العيش في مثل
ذلك المأوى

لقد صنع الرئيس زين
العابدين بن علي الحدث عندما
جعلنا نستفيق من غفوة النعود
على الأشياء المأكوفة. وفعلا،
فالكثير منا، لا يكثر بأشياء
نعاشها في حياتنا اليومية، بل
لا نكف أنفسنا حتى عناء
التساؤل، حتى كانت زيارة
سيادة الرئيس، وما أثارته فينا
من تساؤلات، تماما مثمنا كان
الشان إبان زيارة الزواكرة
والبرامة، والتي ما كان لكثير
من التونسيين - لولا شك

RAHAFAT AL-ISGHA ... WA NAJA'AT AL-HASM

(Close listening and the benefit of decision)

1 Last Wednesday, Canal 7 broadcast some footage of President Zine El Abidine
Ben Ali's visit on Aïd al-Adha to the Borj Bou Lahia oukala, where the President
noted the miserable conditions which the inhabitants of this derelict oukala were
subject to, for [the building] was really about to fall in on those living there. The
5 decision of His Excellency the President was immediate: demolition of this
oukala as soon as possible, and enablement (*tamkin*) of the families [to acquire]
new, fitting housing. This is what actually happened, in just three days, to the
point that some of the residents said that they were unable to grasp what had
happened, and they saw the dream, which had tantalised them for so long,
10 realised overnight.

President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali brought this to people's attention (*sana'a al-*
hadath, lit. 'made the event'), on a day of rest on which all were involved in the
atmosphere of the Aïd. The Head of State, as is his custom, chose to spend the
Aïd with some of those whom the circumstances of destiny prevented from
15 enjoying all the basic means of subsistence. Thus Tunisians, men and women,
interacted closely with the scenes broadcast by the television, and they followed,
with concern and emotion, the conversations between President Zine El Abidine
Ben Ali and the inhabitants of the oukala, admiring once again the close attention
of His Excellency the President, and his listening to the concerns of Tunisians of
20 all classes and categories, and the grasping of the problems presented, and firm
decisions on the basis of sound logic, and the values of charity and altruism, and
taking the hands of the deprived (Arabic: *dhi'af al-hal*).

For is is comprehensible - as His Excellency the President noted in extreme
surprise - that these families have remained waiting for suitable housing since the
25 floods of 1969? Is is comprehensible - as His Excellency the President noted as
well - that a sick citizen's request for a health care card be for a free card, for a
health care card in itself represents free health care? And is it comprehensible
that an old blind man continue living in a shelter like this?

(Close listening and the benefit of decision) continued

President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali created an event when he made us wake up from our slumber, accustomed as we are to daily routine. In effect, many of us do not pay attention to the things alongside which we live our daily lives; we do not bother ourselves – until His Excellency the President's visit, and the questions it made us ask ourselves - as was the case for the President's visit to Zaouakira and Barama. Many Tunisians, if it was not for that visit, would not have imagined that there were regions like this, and that there were Tunisian men and women living in these hard, miserable conditions. Of these conditions, there remains only the image, engraved in [people's minds] - after he enabled the development of living conditions, thanks to the activities of the National Solidarity Fund 26-26, of the inhabitants of this region and numerous other zones d'ombre, all of which President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali is making efforts to remove by the beginning of the new century.

And in only three days, we saw on the 8 pm news, last Sunday evening, scenes about the demolition operations of the Hayy Borj Boulahia which will be transformed into a green area, and we also saw scenes of the new houses which have been placed at the disposal of the families who were living at Borj Boulahia, as well as conversations with some of the inhabitants.

In fact, their features made any words superfluous, and we saw them moving about their new houses, with steps not at all like the sluggish steps which dragged them or with which they dragged their feet over years of deprivation and want. It was natural that we listen to more than one citizen, and he said that he could not grasp what had happened, and how was it possible to grasp joy of these dimensions, which had been achieved in a few hours?

President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, when he decided on the day of the Aïd al-Adha on the necessity for the entire operation to be completed before Monday, wanted, without any doubt, to affirm the importance of the time factor. For as long as there is abundant resolve, and a firm will, and defined objectives, there is no room for slackness. *Mohamed Ali Habachi.*

Readers of the Tunisian press would recognise the above piece as typical of the national public language style. Does any form of active agency on the part of individuals - unless that individual is recognisably named as part of State institution - always have to be effaced? Although this is the case in the vast majority of oukala corpus articles, there is the notable exception in the form of a small series of articles by journalist Jalila Souid in the Arabic language daily, *El Houriya* (to be examined below, 5.3.5). So far we have seen the prevalence of a dominant reading from the professional and political perspective through transitivity and lexis. The lack of other voices comes to seem natural: the President is catalyst, the status of powerless rehousees is maintained. So now I move to an analysis of a full editorial text.

A tale come true

The article 'Close listening and the benefit of action' recounts 'a tale too good to be true', the overnight rehousing of the residents of an oukala in May 1995 thanks to presidential action. How do social agents conduct action in this article?

The President of the Republic is the active subject of nine verbs, all with positive connotations. He is never in the syntactic object position. Subjects of seven verbs, the inhabitants clearly have very little power. Even when the verb is active, the sense is negative: 'they explained ... they hadn't been able to grasp'; 'he said ... he hadn't grasped'. Otherwise they are the subjects of stative verbs: 'have remained waiting', 'were living'. 'They drag their footsteps', or 'are dragged by them', in a section of more imaged language towards the end of the piece. The largest subject category (20 examples) are the inanimates, which can be the TV channel, conditions, dream, circumstances, images. The buildings are the subject of two passive verbs ('the oukala ... will be transferred'; 'new homes were made available') with no responsible agent mentioned. Finally there is a set of verbs which have an inclusive human category: 'we / the Tunisians, men and women' as subject. Here again, though the category concerned is active, the sense is one of passive observation - or observation which would not have taken place without the action of the central social actor in the piece: 'many of us do not concern ourselves with the things alongside which we live (*muayish*) ...', 'we would not have imagined'. There is also an authorial we: 'it was natural that we should listen'.

Any suggestion of group capacity for action is thus absent from the piece. The boundaries of ability to act effectively are clearly drawn. The importance of the action is

built up by the extreme circumstances - emphasized by the series of rhetorical questions, directed by an anonymous voice (although the questions may have been asked somewhere by the President), of the national 'we' in-group.

The linguistic mechanics of this text carefully create strict divisions of categories who can act, and remove agency and responsibility for new homes ('the President emphasised the need that the operation be entirely completed before Monday'). The aim was perhaps to give a lesson to the country, the President demonstrating that attentiveness and firm resolve can get things done. The distribution of agency roles would suggest another message, the ideology of the male leader as the centre of effective decision, the essential reference point.

The same message is demonstrated by the two photographs which accompany the article. Top left, just under the headline, is the President listening to two individuals, distressed and pleading; 'is this possible?' says the President's hand gestures, as he looks right, towards some advisers. The insider reader of this piece would recognise at least two of the figures accompanying the President - to his right, the President's personal physician, and behind his left shoulder, the Governor of the Tunis Region. This insider group is never mentioned in the text however. The photograph is a formulaic one - part of an attention drawing strategy discussed above in 5.3.2. The stereotype it provides is made explicit in the printed word.

Unlike the reporting discussed earlier on in this sub-section, this editorial provides an opportunity for the target audience to feel guilt - at being involved with the Aïd celebrations while the President was consulting, listening, and giving instructions. This addition, however, to the semantic range of feeling and action only serves, however, the hegemonic message: once again usage of linguistic resources normalises the public face of power relations.

5.3.5 'With the inhabitants of El Agba': the rehousee viewpoint.

From the Oukalas to the Khaled Ibn Walid estate:

The inhabitants have been freed from the problems of underdevelopment and they have new aspirations.

An important role expected of the association to help the residents

El Houriya, 15 June 1984.

Pride and recognition:

With the inhabitants of the El Agba estate after the unexpected visit by President Ben Ali

Le Renouveau, 15 October 1994.

In Sidi Mansour and Sidi Baili in the old city: **Good news for those of modest conditions** - a new housing project

El Houriya, 19 November 1994.

The vast number of the articles present news on the progress of the Oukala Project in a simple format. However within the corpus are four articles where the words of Medina residents and rehouses are quoted. One article is from *Le Renouveau*, one from a news magazine (and is discussed in detail at the end of this chapter for its particular significance) and four are from *El Houriya* newspaper, and are all by the same woman journalist Jalila Souid, who specialises in reporting on social issues, often covering the work of the FNS in remote parts of the country.

L'Observateur news magazine apart, it is interesting to note that the only newspapers which quote actual residents' words (or rather their words transposed into one of the official written languages) are the twin dailies, *Le Renouveau* / *El Houriya* - both official organs of the ruling RCD party. This may seem paradoxical, but it was suggested to me that given the closeness of these papers to the State, it had probably been easier for them to build up, and maintain, some degree of autonomy in their reporting. Slightly better funded, they may well be able to allow themselves the luxury of maintaining more staff journalists with areas of special interest, although this is pure conjecture.

What is surprising is a certain liberty of expression in these articles. Therefore the linguistic analysis now moves to examining how the 'reality' of the oukala existence is

expressed in these 'slice of life' articles, how the oukala residents are seemingly permitted to express these views. How then is the people's voice handled in these articles?

The four articles from *El Houriya* are all by the same journalist, Jalila Souid; the piece entitled 'Pride and recognition' is from *Le Renouveau*, and rather different in tone. Here the journalist has visited the El Agba estate just 24 hours after the presidential visit to see the atmosphere there. The Souid articles, in contrast, are essentially composed of fragments of interviews with individuals, mediated by a member of municipal personnel of some kind (the chief housing and welfare officer or one of the social workers). Direct quotations, raising problem issues, are mixed with poetic touches describing neighbourhood or Dar Lasram, and recommendations for action. Short paragraphs in the formulaic official tone set the information firmly in the framework of the State development storyline:

It is thus that this unexpected visit undertaken by President Ben Ali, which has been presented and will certainly be followed by other visits in the other localities, proves once more the solicitude accorded by the artisan of this new Tunisia to deprived social categories and the particular interest with which the economically weak are surrounded.

Le Renouveau, 15 October 1994.

(Introduction to an article from *El Houriya*):

In the framework on the consensus for the weak and so that each Tunisian may have his own private, appropriate house, up to the standard of comfort and development that our society has achieved

El Houriya, 19 November 1994.

The fairly extensive use of quotation and the naming of individuals ('Vox pops' in radio jargon) does of course imply a rather different take on the whole Oukala story. I now take a close-up look then at the journalists' 'street level' material and their handling of it, followed by a discussion of the implications in the wider story frame.

Adel Abdellaoui's piece in the *Le Renouveau* brings a certain vividness to the well-worn theme of firm municipal action; a woman tells her tale:

"I used to live in an Oukala in lamentable conditions. One day, in my absence, half of our house collapsed fortunately, the children were at school. With no obstacles and not the slightest delay, we acquired this new house. The Municipality of Tunis spared no effort to help us get rehoused. As for the site of the estate, it's a pleasant location surrounded by several green areas".

Le Renouveau, 15 October 1994.

Towards the end of the piece, problem areas are raised, and a 'sixty year old man' is quoted as saying:

"... now it's up to us to make sure that our estate becomes a place where it is good to live. We're counting on the young people to attain this objective".

The use of quotation services to add a little colour to our otherwise mundane account of how people obtained their new homes.

In these articles by Jalila Souid, the material is more complex. Souid writes extensively on social issues, highlighting the successes of various government projects, but also noting failings. Given the highly sensitive nature of the journalists' task in Tunisia, she would appear to have evolved an article format which permits some limited critique.

As previously noted the official policy context is denoted. The words of the 'social cases' are placed in a local setting in a pleasant narrative vein:

..... so this (municipal) service has organised a schedule for receiving citizens. Thursday was the appointed day for anyone with a problem in his life. Thursday came and with Mme Hamdan, we lived many varied stories and solutions urgent and delayed which we wanted as a real picture. So this is the story of Thursday at the headquarters of the Conservation of the Medina; the building is so beautiful that it can take away all cares.

El Houriya, 15 April 1995.

Or, as an introduction to a piece on the Douar Hicher estate.

Today we return to the Khaled Ibn Walid estate. Any residential complex has its problems which were created with the complex. The Oukala residents are a

special fabric of society which was established and grew in the heart of the capital, or 'the Medina' to use a more correct expression, and this fabric left its original environment (sic) to live in another climate, ... and this must be followed, and this is what we are doing *El Houriya*, 11 June 1994.

These articles then move on to a series of interview fragments - not however, after it has been made clear that the visit to the deprived area / housing office at Dar Lasram is taking place in the company of a *murshida* (social worker / inspector); in the case of the piece entitled 'Social Cases solutions urgent and delayed' all contact with these 'cases' is mediated by Mme Hamdan.

In the article about the Sidi el Mansour area (headline: 'Good news - new housing project') the residents raise problems of overcrowding and water supply, dangerous housing and also the issue of demolition and local identity. In the 'visit to Douar Hicher piece', residents talk about unemployment and transport difficulties, along with the high cost of living in the new areas:

In Farouk Jouini's house we found a girl, Inès - she too wants to express her feelings and thoughts. She said: 'the big difference between living in the oukalas and here is we have a house to ourselves. But living here is difficult, and I hear them all grumbling about the electricity bills - tell the STEG to give us a break'. Where's your Mum?

'My Mum works and Dad too. We go to school, then we come home to wait for them'. *El Houriya*, 11 June 1994.

The journalist uses the same technique to evoke the problems of lone parenthood:

Mohammed Essadek El Khalifi's wife left him and he does not know where she is, and she left him with a son and a daughter. Mohammed make huge efforts to rear and keep them, He has benefited from much help. The two children are models and exemplars, according to the testimony of the (woman) social worker who had been following the case when Mohammed Essadek was living in the Sidi El Béchir area. When he left the area of her activity, he became unable to pay all the expenses..... He said: 'In the capital I used to sell *kaâk* (a sort of salted snack biscuit) on the Place Barcelona and my children were with me playing. But they

study (now) and I cannot be far from them for very long, for there isn't anyone to take care of them'.

El Houriya, 9 June 1994.

Another new resident has a husband in prison:

Wasila El Mkecher: what work?

This is the mother of two children and the father was arrested four years ago; she said that she even contacted the prisons department... but they were unable to help her. What work? A stable income is necessary... to help the mother and her two children. Who will answer I wonder... and with all this; the electricity bill is 57 dinars.

El Houriya, 11 June 1994.

The journalist thus arranges her material to allow a spread of individual problems to be raised. Issues are presented in highly personalised terms, short, rather sad stories lived by ordinary people - who are glad to be given the chance to speak. However there is no wider political solution to this state of affairs. The rehoused people are subordinate, waiting in incomprehension for the state to act.

Although the short, first person testimonies give the impression that there is an open dialogue which might produce results, the expression of these micro-narratives only serves to reaffirm the existing institutions / rehousee relationship. The hierarchical construction represented elsewhere in the corpus is continued, although recast in a different guise. In the interview pieces, as in the routine news statements, text and image combine to create a representation according to which the State solves problems for the weak - totally ignoring people's strategies for getting by. Repeating individual experiences may help give others hope, but it is certainly not empowering. There is little mention in these texts of community or extended family, or indeed of other social networks.

The journalist does however put forward a few solutions. Here however the approach is on two levels: the presentation of individual problems to be resolved ('it remains for us to point to the need for the rapid issue of health care cards to those who have a right to them') and a more general evocation of the need for action:

Would not the information of water associations be possible in these neighbourhoods to take on organising the distribution of water... in addition to the cost of consumption, water is to be considered a treasure not to be wasted.

El Houriya, 19 November 1994.

Or:

The Khaled Ibn Walid estate is not a society cut off from the rest of the region. It is a part of a whole, and it is essential for an increase in the efforts of numerous structures and individuals... to form associations to take on intervention to solve the problems of residents, so that everything does not continue to be on the shoulders of the State.

El Houriya, 11 June 1994.

Solutions are thus suggested in broad march terms which are also left vague as to who exactly is to implement them (see the discussion on agents and action in 5.3.6 following). Abstract vocabulary ('the formation of water associations'; 'an increase in the efforts of numerous structures...') and the workings of nominalisation move the suggested action away from real individuals. Only individuals without official responsibilities are named - apart from the chief housing officer, who in her interview article, takes a series of decisions with direct impact.

I am suggesting here that by the choice and ordering of content and style, a journalist such as Jalila Souid can allow herself to broach difficult issues without suffering any official feathers. It is unlikely that Souid, having done a good deal of field interviewing, is unaware of the weaknesses of the Oukala Project (see section 6.5 below for stigmatisation of estate residents and 6.7 for criminality). There is thus a filtering of the information presented to the public - what educated Tunisians sometimes refer to as *l'auto-censure*, 'self-censorship'. This 'content filter' works to keep the rare personalised reporting in line with the formula accounts.

The effect is to produce a view where there is in fact no real challenge to the established order. (As I said above there is 'an impression of openness'). But, in fact, responsibility can never be apportioned, individual departments can never be criticised for their lack of responsiveness. Although there is mention of neighbourhood committees (*lijan al-hayy*) - often seen as mere extension of the Party - and of associations, the shared nature of

people's problems is not really evoked, and nor is it theorised in the terms usually employed in the European press: multiple deprivation, multi-occupancy / *surdensification* are not part of the world view. The oukala residents or the rehousees can do little more than bring individual complaints. The journalist cannot or does not allow herself to suggest self-help by residents in anything more than the very loosest terms.

There is, however, another form of filtering at work in this set of articles: a linguistic/translation filter. All journalists, in any language, probably have to arrange the natural language of the subjects they interview. In the Tunisian press, however, this goes one step further, the words of interviewers and interviewed being translated into the written language by the author, thus producing journalistic mediation of a rather extreme kind. Writers do, in journalistic prose, allow themselves the occasional phrase in Tunisian Arabic (rather as a British writer might evoke a Northerner by spelling 'laugh' as 'laff'), but the rule is to transform all quotations into the written form. For example, the reader will find *jazahu Allahu khayran* ('May God recompense your good actions'), instead of dialect *rebbi yejizek bil-khir* (see *El Houriya*, 15 October 1994).

The result of this translation, I would argue is a flattering and total transformation of expression and resultant altitudinal meanings. Take, for example, the following extract:

We are eight people in one room, unemployed, some of use live from marginal jobs in the souks, including unlicensed stands and intermediary (work) in deals and buying and selling... but stable employment , they are lost to us because we do not have qualifications or a specialism.
El Houriya, 19 November 1994.

The underlined words would all be different in dialect, as the following table shows:

Standard Written Arabic	Tunisian Dialect	English
'atiloun 'an al-khidma	<i>Ma 'ind-humsh khidma</i>	they are out of work
al-'amal al-hashimiya	<i>Yudebrirou fi-ru's-hum</i>	occasional work
al-intisab al-ghayr murakhas	<i>Nasba bilash rukhsa</i>	unlicensed stand or stall
al-wadhaif al-qarra	<i>Khidma fixe</i>	stable employment

My argument is that there is a distancing effect operating here. It is of course impossible to tell to what extent the journalist is excluding the more critical, inflammatory points of view. (How Arabic writing journalists deal with transposing ideas to the formal language could be a research project in its own right). An obvious result of this linguistic process is that interviewers and interviewed both appear to speak the same language. This is what the conventions of the Tunisian press require; the distance between readers spoken idiom and writing is an accepted feature of the linguistic landscape - never questioned. For journalists, it probably has the distinct advantage of enabling them to reduce the sharpness of controversy expressed in local language under the blanket of the formal language.

This of course is not the only form of distancing used in the personalised pieces. (As mentioned in 5.3.3, 'poetic' writing in the Arabic tradition serves to make the oukala people less substantial, 'plunged in the dark fog of houses on the point of ruin', *El Houriya*, 11 June 1994). The reporting analysed here keeps the problems individual, at arm's length - and essentially resolvable. By writing in this way, the journalist avoids challenging the status quo. The STEG or Douar Hicher health group, alerted to the existence of the problems areas by an article in the most official of the official newspapers can presumably take action. (There is no evidence in the 'Oukala corpus' of a journalist attempting to investigate official bodies - other than Dar Lasram - to substantiate Oukala resident or rehousee claims of unfair treatment). Now is there any suggestion that Oukala residents can do more than bring individual complaints. The public lobby group is definitely not a feature.

Thus despite the very personalised tone of the interview-based reports, the fragments of quotation presented as credible responses in a situation of multiple deprivation, the power-balance remains the same. The reports have a certain liveliness. Despite the tone which might seem condescending to an English readership (the constant reference to people as 'social cases'), they are an all too rare representation of the starker side of housing deprivation. I now move to another rare representation: the treatment of the professional viewpoint in the media.

5.3.6 Expert knowledge, significant figures and technical language

In an English or French newspaper, we can expect to read interviews with an architect on the subject of a new project, find articles peppered with quotations by planners, engineers and 'local residents' on the latest phase of a neighbourhood improvements project. In the 'Oukala corpus', the professional viewpoint is even more under-represented than that of the rehoused populations. In only five articles - two from *Le Temps*⁸⁹, three from *El Houriya*⁹⁰ - do *techniciens* responsible in some way for project implantation express themselves. The articles from *El Houriya* are based on interviews with the chief housing and welfare officer, those from *Le Temps* quote different architects responsible for aspects of the Oukala Project and conservation policy. It is perhaps surprising that the architects are not quoted in the Arabic language press - and that the material based on interviews with Mme Hamdan (see below) has not crossed over into *El Houriya*'s French language twin paper.

In this small selection of articles, professional experts present their view of the project using technical language. The journalists would seem to have been well briefed with information from the policy documents: quotations take a back seat and are set within a broader text bringing together figures and statistics, elements of technical writing, an personal opinion and suggestions from the journalist. (The latter is particularly true of the article 'Tunis à la recherche d'un visage humain'⁹¹). In one article, the professional is seen intervening in a very direct, personal way; (the context is the Municipal Social Services Office):

S. En-Naoumi is a young man of 29 from the Khaled Ibn Walid estate. He has come to ask for work... and he gave Mme Hamdan the water and electricity bills. Mme Hamdan: This is a case we have followed from the beginning of the Oukala Project... this is a numerous family, we have tried to find solutions for some of

⁸⁹ *Le Temps*, 1 April 1995 and 28 July 1995

□

⁹⁰ *El Houriya*, 26 November 1994, 14 April 1995 and 15 April 1995

□

⁹¹ In *Le Temps*, 28 July 1995 'Tunis in search of a human face'.

□

them like employment for example. As for S., we rehoused him on the Khaled Ibn Walid estate... in fact this estate now comes under the Douar Hicher *délégation*⁹² (area), but we can't break the link with them until they have been completely accepted by the social services in the area.

As for the bills, we'll pay the water bill before everything else. He's a father of children and we will give him a coupon to buy food and milk for the children and we will transfer his file to the social services in his region. *El Houriya*, 15 April 1995.

The article from which this extract is taken is composed of items of this kind. It is nevertheless an exception in the portrayal of professional knowledge. (There are no interviews quoted between architects and have owners trying to push for concessions in a building permit). Rather, the architect is quoted or cited on the basis of technical knowledge:

We are counting on the private sector, explains Mme Yaïche, on owners. Rehabilitation can be more profitable than demolition, which in the final analysis is expensive, take for example the cost of removing rubble. And then rebuilding foundations on the silty ground of Tunis pushes up costs, and developers (lit. owners) go for commercial property to avoid making a loss. But you don't have to demolish for a building to become profitable.

Le Temps, 23 July 1995.

Sometimes the language is more abstract, the Oukala story fitted in to a piece on the built heritage:

"Our interest in heritage and the problems of its rehabilitation, cannot be considered, in our societies, outside of social, cultural and economic priorities" affirmed Mme Yaïche, saying that it was only through these concerns that heritage conservation could find appropriate solutions. *Le Temps*, 1 April 1995.

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Sometimes the issue is presented by the expert with supporting figures:

⁹² *délégation* (original Arabic mo'tamadiya) local administrative unit of a governorate (*wilaya*)

Said Mme Hamdan:

The project has two basic elements which are, firstly - the rehousing of 360 families, that is to say, the demolition of 72 dangerous buildings,⁹³ including seven considered as ruins, unfit for habitation. Of these 360 families, the study showed that 121 families live in surfaces unfit for habitation - like under the stairs in the aforementioned buildings. And all these are confirmed cases. As far as social circumstances, these can be schematized as follows: (breakdown of household activities with percentage).

El Houriya, 14 April 1995.

How useful is this display of professional knowledge to the ordinary newspaper reader? Essentially, the five articles with professional 'words' provide important, more detailed discussions of the background to the Oukala Project: the activities of the Municipal Social Welfare Department, the ins-and-outs of the rehabilitation process, perspectives on the extension of the project into a further phase. The quotation of professionals' words also enables their values and ideology to be naturalised in the public domain. It is interesting to note that there is no challenge to the dominant view of the project - apart from an instance in the Leïla Haddad article of July 1995:

In fact, might not this rehabilitation plan for Tunisia lead to the phenomenon observed in certain capitals, i.e. a 'rich' centre, with extremely high rents, reserved for an élite, and very middle class suburban areas.

"We want a social rehabilitation, not a restoration not a renewal" explains Mme Yaiche. The loans granted will be for saving the structures of the building, and not for improvement, like central heating etc.

Le Temps, 28 July 1995.

The challenge to the professional viewpoint is thus immediately dealt with by the use of a combination of abstract terms and practical knowledge. The attempt to move to a more critical portrayal of social relations in the upgraded city centre melts away with a series of non-sequiturs.

⁹³ The original Arabic uses the equivalent of the French IMR, *immeubles menaçant ruine*)

The textual usages of usages of terminology and figures are not without their problems. What just is a 'social rehabilitation'? For the architect, the terms *réhabilitation*, *renovation* and *restauration* have precise technical meanings: upgrading, demolition / rebuild, and restoration according to historic criteria. For the lay reader, their significance may be more blurred. To say that 'the *assainissement* of social housing has represented the spearhead of Tunisian policy for the protection of the Medina' leaves the reader grappling (if they concentrate on the text) with the implications of the blanket term 'assainissement' - perhaps best translated as 'the settling of social housing problems'. The use of the term social housing here also probably indicates a misquotation as the journalist has misunderstood the meaning of 'social housing': in fact there is very little social housing (low-cost, good housing) in the Medina, while since the 1960's there has been a large population in dire need of social housing.

The same sort of problem besets the citing of official figures: sometimes they differ slightly between articles, occasionally they are wildly wrong or are simplified. The cost of a unit at Douar Hicher may be variously quoted as 10,500 dinars and 12,400 dinars. Ultimately, the display of both technical jargon and significant figures, without uniformed interpretation is a rhetorical device more than anything else, helping to legitimate the status quo. The core values - that the forces of the market must determine a building's value, that the historic built fabric be remodelled according to the tenets of professional culture - remain intact. The Oukala Project is legitimate and national, any conflicts which may be occurring are kept out of the way. The question remains, however, as to why there is so little professional comment on the conception and execution of the Oukala Project in the press.

Here I can only hypothesize, drawing on fragments of discussion. As it is only possible to present the official view of municipal and government activity in the Medina, the result is unlikely to be scintillating investigative journalism. Leïla Haddad's article in *Le Temps*⁹⁴, although it enumerates all the problems facing all ageing early twentieth century city centres (traffic pollution, decaying buildings, departure of residents) carefully avoids attributing this state of affairs to any failure in municipal or government housing or urban policy, past or present. Mme Hamdan's resolution of rehousee problems is aside any wider debate on causes; the Social Welfare Department is seen as covering a broad

⁹⁴ 'Tunis à la recherche d'un visage humain', 28 July 1995.

spectrum of problems (*an-najda al-'ajila*, 'unsent help' in the form of food, money and certain medicines, assistance with finding work and setting up businesses). The question of eligibility and access to these various forms of assistance is left unclear,⁹⁵ and it would seem that the various forms of assistance made available to oukala rehousees are very exceptional, given the Municipality's limited resources.

The point is that further investigative reporting of professional viewpoints might open professionals - and hence policy - to criticism, possibly based on misquotation or misunderstandings. The Social Welfare Department is happy with how it is reported - at least as far as I could gauge, hence the number of reports in *El Houriya*. In *Le Temps*, the journalist had a weaker grasp of the material, as illustrated above. To draw on evidence which perhaps belongs more in the next chapter, I recall discussions with planners complaining how they had spent an hour or more with a journalist explaining the particular difficulties of the home upgrading loans programme (for example) only to find the information ignored or wildly skewed in the press article a few days later. Hence professionals, unless they have a particularly good relationships with the newspaper concerned, may prefer to avoid potential problems raised by too much information for an article over which they have no control. A few figures and a quotation are enough to give a piece an authoritative edge anyway, and the particular professional vision of policy and the city is maintained and transmitted to a wider audience.

5.3.7 Demolition, preservation and the new domestic landscape

Seeing my interest in buildings, w. wanted to show me a fine house near the lycée in Tadhamen, a house he called 'dar midhkama yasser' (how to translate the adjective 'midhkham', with its connotations of elegant, desirable, chic?) 'kull-ha zliz', he said, 'it's all tiles, and indeed it was. On a partly

⁹⁵ There is some indication of this in the article of 26 November 1994, *El Houriya*, on the Municipal Welfare Service: '... its concerns are intervention in many sectors, including: the stable revenue section (*qita' al'ianat al-qana*). As for the Capital Municipality, 500 individuals have stable help, 80 are old people whom we seek to keep within the family. The remainder is allotted to the handicapped children of municipal employees. As for the remaining needy, they have help from the Ministry of Social Affairs, and their files are studied and a municipal decision on them is taken.' (The term *'iana qara* presumably means care allowance).

tarmacked street, lined with one storey houses, most joined to each other with party walls, was a house completely covered with pale blue and white bathroom tiles. 'You see, they don't have to paint, says W. I find myself wondering whether the interior is all tiled too. (fieldnotes, 10 February 1997)

I now move to discuss the different visions of the home and the city circulating in the oukala articles. The multiple meanings which places may acquire is a theme to be found in work by numerous recent writers - see, for example, Massey 1991⁹⁶ - and the different emphases on the built environment can be read in this press corpus, meanings which will emerge more strongly in the discussions of neighbourhood recounted in chapter 6, based on extensive interviewing in the new estates.

The Oukala Project centres on two contrasting types of domestic space: the unfit, dangerous housing of the old city, and the clean, planned housing on the periphery. Both figure in photographs used to illustrate articles on the project. Although the oukala images are of poor quality on the whole, they nevertheless give a sense of what the decaying housing is like, images which would be familiar to any Tunisian going into one of the *bled el-'arbi*⁹⁷ areas: the newspapers use photographs of dank courtyards hung with washing, of façades with broken windows and flaking stucco ('Saving the city from a state of manifest dereliction', runs a photo title⁹⁸). Sometimes there are close-up images of facilities (a broken neighbourhood standpipe⁹⁹) or a rudimentary interior (a rough and ready kitchen) - 'Maybe the kitchen will be beautiful one day', runs the caption¹⁰⁰. Articles with views of decayed housing are also on occasion accompanied by snapshot images of residents.

⁹⁶ Massey, D. (1991) 'The political place of locality studies' in *Environment and Planning A*, 23 (2), pp.267-281

⁹⁷ *bled el-'arbi*: term used to refer to the oldest parts of a city in Tunisian dialect, cf French *médina*.

⁹⁸ *Le Temps*, 28 July 1995

⁹⁹ *El Houriya*, 19 November 1994

¹⁰⁰ *ibid* (note 99)

The new estates are photographed at both street level and in rooftop panoramas. Here in contrast to the dereliction of the oukalas of the inner city is a neat streetscape, an ordered panorama, created at the behest of the State. It is a streetscape of salvation ('Hayy El Agba saved the inhabitants of the oukalas', runs the caption to a picture of some neat, white, standardized homes in *El Houriya*, 15 October 1994). There is no Médina-type architectural detailing, although in the 1990s, this became a part of numerous SNIT¹⁰¹ and private company housing developments in the suburbs. A view of the El Agba estate shows the new recreation area, filled with children playing on the climbing frames, against the backdrop of the cube-shaped houses; 'The oukalas: soon to be a past which will not return', runs the caption (*Er-Rai El-'Am*, 2 March 1996). There is a hint of environmental determinism in the deployment of these images, contrasting as they do with the leprous walls of the dank, multi-occupancy buildings.

The portrayal of the historic city and its buildings in words is more complex, however. Several sets of meanings can be traced, intersecting, some gaining ground, others waning, in different rhetorical styles. Some writers favour a personalised, 'poetic' style which would sound out of place if used in an English-language news item on slum clearance:

Who among us does not remember these hovels scattered almost everywhere across the city¹⁰² and in which live, crammed in any old how, whole families lacking the minimum for a decent life? Who has not had the experience of passing, one day, in front of the immense wooden door, eternally half-open, of one of these oukalas in a fairly advanced state of dereliction? With a furtive glance through the door, we have certainly had a thought for these people condemned by bad luck, pushed to stagnate in overcrowding, while all around the city built numerous successful new developments¹⁰³.

Réalités, 31 March - 6 April 1995

The authors of the Arabic-language pieces sometimes try to convey the feeling of decay and deprivation in a similar style:

¹⁰¹ SNIT: Société national immobilière de Tunisie (National para-statal enterprise founded to undertake housing development for lower income groups).

¹⁰² The writer uses the term *ville*, which in this context presumably means the Médina.

¹⁰³ I have rendered *réussites urbanistiques* as 'successful new developments', perhaps not as high flown as the French original

I may be very optimistic when I describe to the dear reader the beautiful side of this layer of society [the writer has just described neighbourhood solidarity] ... but this life has another face ... emptiness and longing for another life which we cannot reach is the basis of this other face, and fear of the future may shape it, [a future] which seems like these walls which have lost their balance with the passing of days, leaning inwards and outwards, and becoming a danger to those who live inside them.

El Houriya, 19 November 1994

The tone is mystificatory, the leaning walls of the oukalas a metaphor for an unstable society - which the writer does not feel able to comment upon in more concrete terms. Both pieces, translated fairly literally into English, perhaps have something of the feel of nineteenth century British writing on slums and the city.

Elsewhere the description of the old city is nostalgic. Although this is a place of decay, traces of regret about the demolitions and changes can be found in the corpus articles; I quote a long extract from a conversation with a Médina resident, interviewed about his quarter, who 'spoke to us with a courtesy which only survives among a few people':

This is the dome (*qubba*) of Sidi El Baïli, and in that corner of the square was another qubba, why they demolished that qubba we don't know ... and so the square was empty and the *zuwwar* (the faithful) still to this day flock to visit the pious saint and light candles and recite the *fatiha*¹⁰⁴ ... El Hajj Lahbib Nasra spoke about [people's] behaviour and the large part of the Médina which has been lost ... and about water and the tap in the corner of the square which drew those in need ... until it became the cause of quarrels and bad language.

El Houriya, 19 November 1994

Alongside the nostalgia theme, (of which there are only a couple of instances in the corpus, after all), new, more positive meanings of the old city can be traced. The upgrading of existing property is frequently mentioned in the later pieces (1995 onwards), once the rehabilitation programme was set to go through. The brave new estates have been built, and the architects of the ASM and the Municipality are quoted

¹⁰⁴ The *fatiha*: the short, opening soura of the Koran, recited on ceremonial occasions.

explaining the heritage value of early twentieth century Tunis, the Bab B'har district in whose decaying *immeubles*¹⁰⁵ many rehoused families once lived:

'In Tunis', continued Mme Yaïche, 'besides the Arab-Muslim buildings, a quantity of styles co-exist which have produced very beautiful buildings ...'

'The colonial buildings, of which certain have a style unique to Tunis', confided M. H'mida El Omrani, director of the city enhancement scheme, 'are part of our heritage too. There's no use being embarrassed about these fine survivors of colonialism, they are ours.' And because they belong to us, we must take care of them too.'

Le Temps, 28 July 1995

Thus regarding the built environment, a constellation of inter-related meanings can be read from the press corpus. The dangerous oukalas were to be demolished, their inhabitants saved in the purified domestic landscape of the new estates. But the old areas are also the object of a nostalgic discourse - neighbourhood monuments are regretted, and while the view of the Arab-Muslim building as authentic is clearly rooted now, a new line of thought which attaches value to the colonial buildings can now be expressed. Thus, while the press corpus is not exactly rich in representations of the built environment, the instability and variety of meanings which can be attached to place is nevertheless apparent, with the new housing as the result of State rationality arguably the most powerful in terms of strengthening the status quo. Though there is frequent mention of the upgrading scheme, gentrified streetscape has yet to be portrayed - although the fact that people are interested in the demolition sites is mentioned.¹⁰⁶

The creation of the new estates takes the former oukala resident to *al-bayt as-sa'id*, the 'happy home', to use the standard Arabic expression of the press articles. In the closely packed, neat cuboid forms shown in the photographs, we can see the product of the State's mobilising capacity. The more informal - and often dangerous and overcrowded forms of shelter available in the Médina have disappeared. Now we have a new, regular

¹⁰⁵ *immeubles*: apartment buildings. The term used in Arabic articles (*binayat*, lit: 'buildings') leads to confusion, and covers a much wider semantic field than the French *immeuble*, used for dense, city centre apartment accommodation of a type dating from the mid-nineteenth century.

¹⁰⁶ See for example *Es-Sabah*, 25 October 1994

domestic streetscape displayed, perhaps the most visible symbol of a State implementing an effective social policy.

What is interesting about the pictorial images of the new estates, however, is what goes unrepresented: the surrounding areas, expanses of largely unfinished self-built houses, are completely excluded from representation. The geometric, white-painted¹⁰⁷ forms of the new houses in fact contrast with the already existing housing, with its partly rendered façades and unfinished red brick floors, their reinforced concrete posts pointing skywards. Likewise with regard to the oukala images: there are no photographs which would suggest that there is decent accommodation in the Médina as well. In both cases, neighbourhood characteristics - distances, the wider surroundings, area facilities - go unmentioned. In the general context of the newspaper; images of the estates might contrast with the advertising imagery of the new upmarket resort-estates at Hammamet and Gammarth.

Underpinning these images of the built environment is a strong trace of moral duty. 'El-Agba El-'Alia, or when a humanised estate (*cit  humanis e*) replaces the oukala'; runs a headline. Writes a journalist in *El Houriya*:

In these homes, which have lost many facilities, ... and from whose patios rises the smell of sewers and rubbish, a human being can find no repose.¹⁰⁸

In these images of the Médina and the estates, we are thus looking at what Shields calls 'the pre-constructed cultural discourses about sites', 'the logic of common spatial perceptions accepted in a culture'.¹⁰⁹ The photographs of decay and order can be viewed in the light of Shields' concept of 'spatialisation', 'the recordings of geographical spaces

¹⁰⁷ The newspaper images are in black and white, but the whole issue of colour symbolism in Tunisian housing might be explored. Traditionally, white lime wash is used for the outside walls and terraces of Tunisian dwellings, and for interior walls where untiled. Out in the countryside, especially in the central coastal regions, villages and isolated dwellings can be picked out by their whitewashed dwellings. White is also the colour of the upmarket private villa, of the tourist zone hotel. In poorer areas, brown or ochre Tyrolean rendering is favoured for its durability, and as it does not show the dirt. Hence white evokes wealth, traditionality and the official building - and the government built estate.

¹⁰⁸ *El Houriya*, 19 November 1994

¹⁰⁹ Shields, Rob (1991) *Places on the Margin: alternative geographies of modernity* London: Routledge, pp. 29 and 31

[where] sites become associated with particular values, historical events and feelings'.¹¹⁰ The Médina as site of dereliction (and national decadence) is however only one image - though a powerful one which took root after independence in 1956. In part of contemporary Tunisian civic and nationalist discourse, the monuments of the Médina are a preferred image, where the old city is a repository of national, Arab and perhaps more importantly Muslim values. It is part of the nation's heritage. The image of the Médina and its dwellings as élite residential space signifying taste and 'cultural capital' has yet to figure widely in the media.

Here in the oukala corpus, however, we are left with reductive images of the home. A social process is taking place in the city, physically represented in terms of two contrasting localities. But essentially these are the images of the politico-professional community - selling the project to the wider national constituency. How a segment of 'oukala discourse', focusing on one event, a Presidential visit, fits into the wider national discourse is the subject of the next sub-section.

5.4 Solidarity and the national symbolic environment

Ben Ali's visit touched us deeply, it is the crowning of a dream which was unachievable for us. This 13 October will be a date that goes down in the history of our estate. It would be the best name to give to the estate, so much has it marked for ever our great joy in receiving the sponsor of the poor. We all came out, as one man, to give him the great welcome that he merits.

words of a rehousee quoted in *Le Renouveau*, 15 October 1994

I now wish to widen the frame of analysis to the metaphor of national solidarity which runs through the corpus. The discourse on the Oukala Project found in the Tunisian print media might be characterised as deeply paternalist for the level of attention given to the role of the male head of state in the initiation and execution of the project. The firm action taken by the President, however, comes within the context of certain shared values - most notably solidarity - (to which he is clearly seen to adhere). In this section I will examine how this sense of sharing is promoted, and how this fits with other features in the national symbolic environment. The texts in which the solidarity / sharing theme

¹¹⁰ *ibid* (note 109), p.30

most explicitly feature are the editorials. The analysis thus focuses on four French language editorials: 'A worthy and decent place to live', 'El Agba and the obligation of solidarity', 'Solidarity in openness' and 'The right to dignity'.

As Hodge and Kress¹¹¹ note with regard to press editorials, this is the place where:

... the paper's ideology is clarified and re-established, reasserted in relation to troublesome events. It is also the place where the paper speaks most directly to its readership, presenting its perception of 'reality' in the form which it regards as most suitable for its readership.

The editorial is thus the place where the link is most directly established between newspaper owners and readers, where values are put forward in their most explicit form, for reflection and discussion, acceptance and rejection. An examination of the small sample of editorials in the 'oukala corpus' reveals an almost formulaic structuring of ideas. The editorial moves from the initial motivation for action, generally subsequently discussed in the light of a recent event (here two of the editorials deal with the presidential visit to El Agba and the Fête de l'évacuation); then there is presentation of achievements so far, statement of current measures under way, and the newspaper's own viewpoint followed by the linking in of the item to the national context. This is community discourse, with common culture and shared beliefs the key theme.

There are a number of discursive strategies available to promote a sense of shared values, of which the most obvious is perhaps the use of the indexical pronouns we / us - employed also, as seen in the quotation which opens this section, in the construction of estate solidarity by an El Agba estate resident. However, reader involvement is constructed on a more complex basis than just first person pronouns. The two key actors, the national community and the President are integrated by the use of a cluster of keywords referring to abstract concepts - solidarity, security, citizenship, dignity, development. Two clear poles are established, the Tunisians (*tous les Tunisiens*) and the Head of State. The reader is presumed to be a member of the national group, sometimes the nation is referred to by name. So, for instance, when the President visits an isolated settlement:

¹¹¹ Hodge, R. and Kress, G. (1979, 1993) *Language as ideology* London: Routledge, p.17

[he] does not hesitate to note weaknesses and recall that in terms of solidarity, much still remains to be done.

A lesson of modesty, humility, and perseverance which is an example for all to follow: citizens, NGOs, administration, company directors, local authorities ... And which reminds each and everyone of us that Tunisia must work hard to guarantee prosperity to benefit everyone.

from *La Presse*, 15 October 1994, (inclusive words underlined)

The values ascribed to the President are thus projected onto the diverse groups within the nation state as a model to follow if solidarity, prosperity is to be achieved for everyone. In another editorial of the same date, the lead columnist of *Le Temps* pushes the description of how solidarity should work somewhat farther, however:

The security and stability which we benefit from ... must be paid for with the increased participation of all Tunisians, and above all, of those who have the means to do so, in the solidarity programmes. The State, that is to say, the national community, makes important resources available to promoters, industrialists, hotel developers and to the whole network of businesses which benefit from all sorts of incentives.

In exchange, these businesses have an obligation to reserve part of their profits to solidarity programmes. The needs are great and require a consequent effort on everybody's part, if we want to succeed in winning the extraordinary bet placed on the Tunisian's sense of responsibility and solidarity.

from *Le Temps*, 15 October 1994 (inclusive words underlined)

The message is more directed here, going something like 'we are a national community, and we are lucky to have stability, so those who are doing the best must contribute to keeping this state of affairs'. The references to those who are benefitting from state subsidies of course can only be understood in context. Tunisia in 1994 was enjoying steady economic growth, and it was quite clear that some were doing a lot better than others. This class division cannot be allowed to figure too openly within the parameters of the discourse.

Rather, alongside the President, the chief actor in these editorials is the 'chorus' of Tunisians, the undifferentiated national group. Here this group is situated by the editorial writer in relation to two symbolic, 'shared' events:

The closeness of the visit to El Agba to the celebration of the anniversary of the Evacuation is not by chance. Both of these events underline the importance of solidarity between Tunisians. Yesterday they fought for their liberty.

Today they must succeed in a combat which is just as exalting, to triumph in the challenge of development, be worthy of the fatherland and all the martyrs who sacrificed themselves for the independence we enjoy today and which we have the primary duty of preserving and protecting.

in *Le Temps*, 15 October 1994, (front page, inclusive words underlined)

Shared values are the motif of the middle part of this editorial. The defence of national independence, achieved by national solidarity as exemplified in the siege of Bizerte which led to the withdrawal of the last French troops, somehow lends meaning to the present metaphoric battle for development. Achieving economic success is seen to be based on solidarity, seen as the core value in this text of the independence movement. In linguistic terms, the sharing theme is realised by a mixed use of first and third person indexicals: the message can be summarised as something like 'they gave their lives - we must be worthy of them'.

Thus the editorials undertake the ideological task of attributing shared values and interests to a broadly homogeneous community with apparently similar attitudes; their life chances, however, are unequal, and this imbalance is to be corrected via solidarity. These are values with which it is difficult to disagree, of course. (Logic would have it that Tunisia's economic success since circa 1990 is built upon this very inequality of life chances which makes the country so attractive to relocating international capital). The myth of solidarity is nonetheless a very powerful one, and if we turn to the text, can be seen as well maintained by a number of linguistic features. I thus turn to one of the editorials (from *La Presse*, 15 October 1994) for detailed commentary. A reproduction of the original French text is given, followed by a translation.

Text (features commented subsequently underlined)

La solidarité dans la transparence

HEUREUSE tradition que celle instaurée par le Président Zine El Abidine Ben Ali par ses visites non programmées dans les zones d'ombre, dans les quartiers pauvres, dans les centres de vieillards ou de handicapés, dans les régions qui peinent. Et fort salutaire.

Car ce bain dans les réalités, tantôt amères, tantôt porteuses d'espoir, a, sans doute, l'inestimable mérite de mettre à l'index un point faible de notre tissu social qui appelle un effort de solidarité de la part de la communauté nationale.

Quelle que soit l'étendue du parapluie social mis en place, quelle que soit la sollicitude des pouvoirs publics conduits par le Chef de l'Etat, quelle que soit la portée des interventions du FNS 26.26, quels que soient les efforts développés par le riche réseau associatif de solidarité mis en place depuis le Changement, il y a et il y aura toujours des laissés-pour-compte et des oubliés. Et les visites et interventions du Chef de l'Etat sont là pour nous rappeler à la réalité et nous rafraîchir la mémoire.

Avant-hier encore, en allant constater de visu la cité réalisée à l'intention des 402 familles issues des oukalas, soustraites à un habitat précaire, le Président de la République a, contre toute attente, insisté sur les problèmes d'hygiène qui s'y posent, sur l'absence de lieux de loisirs, sur l'inexistence d'espaces verts, prêtant une oreille attentive au récit des préoccupations et des déboires des indigents relogés.

Même lorsqu'il s'agit de fêter un événement aussi heureux que le relogement des habitants des oukalas, visitées par Ben Ali le 20 décembre 1990, le Président n'hésite pas à relever les faiblesses et à rappeler qu'en matière de solidarité beaucoup reste encore à faire.

Une leçon de modestie, d'humilité et de persévérance qui est un exemple à suivre par tous : citoyens, ONG, administrations, chefs d'entreprise, collectivités locales... Et qui rappelle à chacun et à tous que la Tunisie doit travailler dur pour garantir à terme la prospérité au profit de chacun.

SOLIDARITY IN OPENESS (*La solidarité dans la transparence*)

1 Happy the tradition established by President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali with his unscheduled visits to the *zones d'ombre*, the poor neighbourhoods, the handicapped or old people's centres, the regions in difficulty. And an extremely useful one.

5 Because this immersion in realities, sometimes bitter, sometimes full of hope, has, without doubt, the incalculable merit of pointing to the weak point in our social fabric which calls for an effort in solidarity on the part of the national community.

10 Whatever the extent of the social umbrella set up, whatever the concern of the public authorities led by the Head of State, whatever the impact of the interventions of FNS 26-26, whatever the efforts made by the rich associative network of solidarity established since the Change, there are and there always will be people left out and forgotten. And the visits and the interventions of the Head of State are there to remind us of reality and refresh our memories

15 The very day before yesterday, by going to see for himself the estate constructed for 402 oukala families, removed from precarious accomodation, the President of the Republic, against all expectations, underlined the public health problems posed there, stressed the absence of leisure facilities, the lack of green spaces, lent an attentive ear to the worries and problems of these destitute rehoused
20 people.

Even when an event as happy as the rehousing of the inhabitants of the oukalas, visited by Ben Ali on 20 December 1990, is celebrated, he does not hesitate to note weaknesses and recall that in terms of solidarity, much still remains to be done.

25 A lesson of modesty, humility, and perseverance which is an example for all to follow: citizens, NGOs, administration, company directors, local authorities ... And which reminds each and everyone of us that Tunisia must work hard to guarantee prosperity to benefit everyone.

The following features help in the construction of a coherent world view in the text. Note that where translation of lexis is an issue, I give the original French:

- the term 'tradition' (line 1): regular visits of inspection become a tradition, i.e. something valued and adhered to by members of society;
- 'extremely useful' (lines 3-4) and 'incalculable merit' (line 6): high flown emphasis
- 'immersion in realities' (line 5): metaphor for deprivation which is something out there which can be objectified (and ultimately treated);
- 'the weak point ...' (line 6): dead metaphor - deprivation not too serious, but nevertheless there, part of ...
- 'our social fabric' (*notre tissu social*) (line 7): indexical and metaphor for society (fabric can be repaired);
- concern (*sollicitude*), impact (*portée*), efforts (lines 9-11): abstract nouns to describe actual government or NGO action;
- 'Whatever the extent of the social umbrella... there are and always will be people left out ...' (lines 9-13): metaphor, axiomatic language, high degree of certainty expressed.
- 'The visits ... are there' (line 13-14): universal truth
- 'public health problems ... absence of leisure facilities' / '*problèmes d'hygiène ... absence de lieux de loisir*' (lines 17-18): vague language to indicate what are very real problems
- 'much remains to be done' (line 23-24): universal truth
- 'is an example to follow' (line 25): universal truth
- 'Tunisia must work hard ...' (line 27): personalisation of the nation, high degree of certainty expressed by modal verb.
- 'to benefit everyone' (line 28): inclusive

The editorial writer thus creates a coherent piece of writing based on the deep metaphor of Tunisian society as a cohesive body of individuals resembling a fabric which can be maintained and mended by solidarity. This is a message which extends into much other press reporting, as can be seen by an examination of a small sample of other media items from the mid-1990s.

The analysis now moves from the solidarity theme, (the basic value expressed in the oukala texts) to the wider context. Tunisian State discourse, as analysed by Michel

Camau in the late 1960s (see chapter 3) was essentially a story of progress to development thanks to the work of a national élite. Decadence and darkness were left behind. The Tunisian national discourse of the mid-1990s has moved on a little. I do not pretend that the following summary covers everything. Based on fourteen articles, mainly from *La Presse* and *Le Renouveau*, 1995-1997, my aim is to highlight the main themes which are part of the national symbolic environment in which the Tunisian State creates a public profile for itself. The sample may seem small, but given the highly repetitive, formulaic nature of much Tunisian journalism, and the objective of this discussion, (situating the oukala story in the wider context), I believe it is sufficient.

Tunisian national discourse is based on a fairly constant set of keywords. The core concept, around which four main 'value sets' may be located, is what I see as 'the exemplarity of the nation's efforts and achievements' with the President of the Republic the central exemplar. Official visits and holidays, both secular and religious, provide occasions for this exemplarity to be demonstrated:

The President of Burkina: 'Tunisia, a harbour of peace and an example of success'

President Campaoré underlined in particular 'the perfect concord' which characterises his relations with President Ben Ali whose 'wisdom and realism', he said 'have made Tunisia a haven of peace and an example of success for the whole of Africa at all levels.

La Presse, 19 February 1997 (from a front page item)

The value sets around this core focus on the pair development / heritage and the more directly human attributes, the solidarity set and the tolerance set. There is of course an area of overlap between and within the two pairs.

The development theme was very much in evidence in the 1960s, and remains so today, notably in the form of frequent articles about the *mise à niveau*, a term common in Tunisian politico-media French usage used to designate the national effort to bring industry and businesses up to international norms. The development and solidarity themes can combine however, where there is a call for all to pull together in the interests of progress:

The great change (La grande mutation)

From each Tunisian, at whatever level he is situated and wherever he may be, there is required an extra charge of civic devotion and abnegation which will allow the country to advance at full speed, ... , to confirm its vocation, already acquired, of 'emerging country' of 'dragon of Africa and the Mediterranean Basin' *La Presse*, 29 December 1996 (editorial accompanying major presidential speech)

In the 1960s, the development theme and the past were seen as contradictory. However, since the early 1980s, (when the Mzali government placed renewed stress on links with the Arab world and hence on the country's Arab heritage), and more especially since the late 1980s, there has been a reappraisal of the country's heritage. (As more than one writer has stressed, interest in the past is likely to be especially evident in times of rapid change). The 'national heritage', the vision of history is being renegotiated. The Mediterranean aspect is valorised, possibly because this is the side of Tunisian identity most attractive to potential international and European investors and tourists. So, in an article about Tunis as Unesco cultural capital for 1997, Lebanese Francophone writer Amin Malouf is quoted as saying:

Tunis, capital in all senses of the word

... 'Everything which has counted in Mediterranean culture has found on the territory of today's Tunisia a durable and strong expression.'

La Presse, 19 February 1997

The Islamic dimension is stressed on the relevant holy days, generally marked by presidential participation in a religious ceremony or commemoration. The President made a major speech to mark the thirteenth centenary of the foundation of the Zitouna Mosque, the holiest place in Tunisian Islam:

Ben Ali: giving an authentic image of Islam

... President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali stressed that the Tunisia of the New Era, faithful to its civilisational and spiritual heritage and its symbols, has paid, since the Change, particular attention to the Zitouna Mosque by taking care of its monuments and ordering that the Holy Book be recited without interruption. *La Presse*, 26 November 1996

The heritage / authenticity / religion cluster of ideas is also linked in to the fourth cluster, which includes tolerance, openness, pluralism, democracy and human rights. (This of course relates to the earlier discussion of the Abdallah Saaf's notion of the *juridicisation* of the neo-patriarchal state). The government feels a need to stress the validity of its particular brand of Islam as in the following example on the occasion of the Zitouna commemoration:

Reappropriating the treasures of our heritage - 'Islam and (its) adaptation to the new era's demands

Three currents of thought, all quite different, traverse our societies at the present time: for the Salafiyyas, passeist, the progress proposed to us promises nothing good. And it should be rejected. 'Such an attitude, above all in economic terms, is quite simply suicidal' affirmed M. Abou Ghadda. Opposing this, there are the partisans of an unreserved adhesion to the values which made the West the uncontested master of the planet. To dissolve in the Other is no better than closing up. Happily there is a third way, that which has been chosen by a good number of Arab and Islamic countries which consists in opening up to modernity while remaining faithful to one's values.

La Presse, 29 November 1996 (from an article about the seminar accompanying the celebrations)

Thus Tunisia may reconcile authenticity (heritage) with progress (modernity). This historic past / future dualism will be resolved in the present by the application of human rights, and here Tunisia has attempted to develop an avant garde niche for itself by stressing a link between different kinds of rights:

In a speech on the occasion of the celebration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Ben Ali: to ensure the attributes of dignity for all. Solidarity and mutual help are part of the bases of human rights.

... The guarantee of fundamental and civil rights is indissociable from the guarantee of economic, social and cultural rights, and cannot be achieved without it.

La Presse, 11 December 1996 (front page)

Contributions to the National Solidarity Fund: the élan of solidarity continues

... In a speech, the secretary-general of the RCD underlined the fact that President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali had made National Solidarity Day a privileged occasion for reaffirming the spirit of concorde and mutual help which animates all Tunisians, in favour of the principles established by the Head of State and of which he has made one of the pillars for the building of a democratic and solid civil society, as part of the presidential will to give all Tunisians the attributes of dignity

La Presse, 11 December 1996 (page 6)

Which brings us back round to solidarity and mutual help once more, perhaps the most vivid way in which the novembrist State has sought to demarcate itself from Bourguibist, post-independence Tunisia. The rhetoric runs counter to the élite / masses storyline noted by Camau. Take, for example, this short extract from *Le Renouveau's* special supplement published for the third National Solidarity Day:

FNS: The Concept. Ben Ali inaugurates an exhibition on the achievements of the National Solidarity Fund.

48 months of continuous action, because it is instant by instant that the list of FNS achievements has taken shape since its creation in 1992 by President Ben Ali.

...

This flagship of the New Era, a national achievement of a highly civilisational nature, unique of its kind in the world, and taken as a model because internationally respected and considered.

...

No Welfare State dispensing celestial manna which would encourage a parasitic, assisted mentality. Nor a monocephalic State organism which would disdain the contribution of good will, of all to social promotion and integrated development. In fact, is is a collective responsabilisation in the destinies of the nation, in their accomplishment, their realisation.

The decisive factor, the precarious existence of certain populations in remote regions, *quartiers populaires*, and distant suburbs, a precariousness noted in person by President Ben Ali.

Le Renouveau, 8 December 1996 (front page, special supplement)

Tunisia, like any nation state, thus has a characteristic symbolic national profile with which citizens can identify. In the absence of a highly developed form of participatory democracy, the State makes great play of its closeness to the masses, while creating a careful balance of values which it would be difficult to reject. These are values which are constantly consecrated (*takris* is the Arabic term) by the Head of State in his activities and visits. The oukala rehousing consecrates the values of human dignity, for instance.

This, then, is the backdrop to the depiction of policy in the media - the discursive formation, to use a Foucauldian term. What are the deeper implications of this hegemonic national vision, especially in terms of policy representation? What theoretical conclusions might be drawn about this all-enveloping consensus displayed in the media? The next section moves on to wider ideological framework in which the portrayal of deprivation is situated.

5.5 Building consensus and portraying policy in the media

But what do the beneficiaries think about the Oukala Project?

Ech-Chorouk contacted many of them, and 'it was apparent that they thought the project good, and considered they had been saved from overcrowding, and living on roof terraces and in laundry rooms and from "houses" like caves which could fall on their heads at any moment.

But some of those who replied to use were unhappy about the distance of their new homes from the city centre where they used to live ... and on this subject, Uncle Rebah said: 'It was good living in the centre, I never used to have to take a bus or a taxi to get about and do things for my family. I used to be able to deal with everything just a few metres away from my house.'

from *Ech-Chorouk*, 4 January 1996; last two paragraphs of a short article entitled 'A new estate at Sidi Hassine this year'

The multi-occupancy issue, as can be seen from the corpus, was at times the focus of intense media interest. But despite the numerous articles linked to key events ('made' by the President¹¹²) there is very little in-depth insight - and ultimately very little information. Across the different genera of news pieces examined here, editorials and

¹¹² expression used for example in an article by *El-idha'a wa at-telfaza* (20 May 1995) 'The challenge of listening ... and the success of resolve'

official items, event coverage and feature articles, a consensus regarding this particular aspect of State intervention is maintained. The earlier examination of the planning documents highlights an intertextuality in the storyline. A plausible basis for action, a 'vision' created by the built environment professionals feeds into the visible State narrative.

Two archetypes are on display in this reporting: helpless, deprived citizens, an outgroup often characterized as passive, and a strong, resolved male leader. These types are sustained through linguistic form, conventional imagery and narrative conventions. 'Everything is fine - problems will be resolved' is the reassuring message. One Tunisian journalist explained the construction of this consensus very well, when we were discussing the tone of the press:

Fieldnotes, 14 May 1997, from an interview. But I don't tackle *es-siyasa* (politics), I leave that on one side. I try to tell the truth, but you can't always tell the whole truth, you know the Tunisian citizen isn't aware, if you talk about the problems of the *oukalas*, then he'll say to you, 'Oh the President's project has failed - *mashrou' er-ra'is fshal'*, so you give 50 % of the story. Like the 26-26, if you say that it isn't good, then it becomes, 'there's theft from the 26-26 fund, and then people stop paying (into the fund) We're not in Europe where you can tell the whole story, people aren't aware. Our *masouliyin* (people in authority) have a defect, they want to say everything is good - '*Tout est pour le mieux dans le meilleur des mondes*' - 'Everything is for the best in the best of worlds.' (quoted to me in French).

This viewpoint of a media professional could open up a new line of research on the practices of the Tunisian media. How is information controlled, how is the definition of the 'acceptable version' reached? The journalist, to maintain their position, must play a gate-keeping role, their expectations and attitudes must conform to the established model. Through this conversation I had a glimpse of a complex manipulative nexus, regulating a

version of events drawn from official releases, planners reports, in part sustained by journalist self-censorship.¹¹³

The focus of this news analysis has been more 'traditional' however. It was based, like many other studies, on the 'widely shared feeling that news as a common resource acts as a mode of legitimation, in fact the central legitimating resource', as David Chaney¹¹⁴ puts it; '... broadcast news of any form of news is a core element in the explanations, symbols and rhetoric which justify the social order.'¹¹⁵ The starting point for news studies thus tends to be the existence of major inequalities in society and their continued existence.

Here in this writing on the reporting of the Oukala Project, I have attempted to examine the construction of a consensus view of State intervention, the 'what and how' of a representation fabricated in the press. In terms of structuring elements, many of the standard features of the European press are present: the dramatic allegory, the unusual event, the correction of abnormality. The Tunisian journalists make themselves into the voices of normality. As Ericson *et al* put it:

News acknowledges order as it is preferred by members of the knowledge élites, and creates the class of political spectators.¹¹⁶

In this chapter, I have tried to reveal how the preferred version of the Oukala Project is based on a limited - and in all likelihood limiting - set of stereotypes. That individual people should help themselves and each other outside the framework of national solidarity remains inconceivable. A hegemonic version of reality is constructed¹¹⁷, which can be characterized as neo-patriarchal in its emphasis on the relationship between Head of State and 'his' people. A standard, highly formulaic vocabulary of knowing is used to

¹¹³ 'From the Tunisians I know, it seems to me that they are very well aware of the limits they face, on what can and can't be said, you know in the classroom and elsewhere'. Comment by a Scandinavian researcher with considerable knowledge of Tunisia, November 1997

¹¹⁴ Chaney, D. (1993) *Fictions of collective life: public drama in late modern culture* London: Routledge, p.130

¹¹⁵ *ibid* (note 114) p.131

¹¹⁶ Ericson, R. V. *et al* (1989) *Negotiating control: a study of news sources* Milton Keynes: Open University Press, p.398 quoted in Chaney (note 2) p.133

¹¹⁷

construct this curiously two-dimensional image - I say 'curiously' because despite the frequently mentioned closeness of leader and people, the actual words that pass between them are never quoted.

We are thus dealing with endlessly repeated representations of an aspect of society and a form of knowledge existing in that society. The effect of these limitations I can only hypothesize about. ('There is a sort of orality which is becoming increasingly prevalent', remarked a planner to me when we were discussing the press and how information circulated). The discourse of actuality remains in thrall to the public persona of the Head of State, and in its vocabulary of action and stylistic ticks are all the traces of a newspeak. (Everyday language in Tunisia is vibrant, thankfully free of these Orwellian traits). The mythic dimension given to public policy serves to divert attention from an otherwise problematic area - how was it that the dangerous housing situation reached such a point anyway? who is responsible?. If these questions were posable, the issue would take on a whole new cast.

This examination of Tunisian newspaper discourse therefore also has much to tell us about Tunisian society - about what it is permissible to express publicly, about what is acceptable debate. The permissible representation in the media, the allowable disposition of national symbols and events, links in with what can be expressed in daily life. In the next chapter, essentially a re-presentation of observations of daily lives, the 'permissible' and the challenges to it emerge. Neo-patriarchal hegemony is assured in the media¹¹⁸; the processes of representation are less easily controlled elsewhere however, the natural order is much less stable.

To conclude, my insistence on 'representation' in this piece of work might suggest I am convinced of the possibility of mimesis. Rather I see representations endlessly circulating, highly dependent on cultural factors in their construction. And they can often be oppressive. For this reason, the study of how members of a national group are addressed and engaged in an all-encompassing, legitimatory discourse is a worthy objective. Chaney, among numerous writers, has called for research into 'the distinctive language through which collective ceremonies are constructed and reported, the language of imagination in media accounts'. The present chapter is meant as a small contribution

¹¹⁸ Here I could develop the discussion of hegemony as developed by Gramsci and its relationship to Mediterranean Arab states like Tunisia. I prefer to develop this in section 7.3 of the conclusion.

to analysing the order of neo-patriarchal discourse. By way of a coda to this chapter, I now move to the detailed analysis of a significant neo-patriarchal media event. Although perhaps atypical of the corpus, it brings together many of the features highlighted earlier.

5.6 'Si Jalloul leaves the oukala'

L'OBSERVATEUR

17-23 May 1995 headlines from the cover of the newsmagazine

Ben Ali: support for those who have no support

Elections

Elections: analyses of the lists

Elections: a reading of the lists and campaigns and the man in the street's reaction (dialogues and coverage)

Regional observer: Mahdia, a pearl as the Change wanted it to be

Chirac: the price of tenacity

LA PRESSE

11 May 1995 (11 Doulhajja 1415) headlines from the front cover

Let there be complete joy

The Head of State decides to have the inhabitants of an old oukala benefit from decent housing

Editorial: Race against the clock

USA - politics - first difficulties of cohabitation

Euro-Mediterranean relations: Rome and Madrid for a real 'improvement in quality'

10 May 1995 was Aïd el-Adha, the 'Fête du mouton', the Feast of the Great Sacrifice, celebrated across the Muslim world. A highly symbolic moment, the festival commemorates how the prophet Ibrahim, as he prepared to sacrifice his son, was blessed by Allah with the gift of a sacrificial lamb. Muslims everywhere join together to sacrifice on this occasion - in times of drought, when the herds are low, a country may resort to

heavy imports or the head of state may sacrifice on behalf of the nation. In Tunisia, (mid-1990s), the price of a ewe in the weeks prior to the sacrifice could reach between 80 and 100 dinars - the national minimum wage being 120 dinars. Following the ritual slaughter, the beast, generally a lamb, is cut up, and every part, from intestines to fleece, treated and prepared for use of some kind; stomach and innards are rigourously cleaned and prepared for stuffing, meat prepared for salting, while the horns of a ram may be hung up to ward off the evil eye.

The Aïd El Adha is a time for families to gather. Small shops in the capital will close a few days beforehand as their owners return to the *bled*, their hometown, to be with family. In the evening of the Aïd, family visits take place - the women at home, perhaps gathered in front of the television, tired after the intensive activity involved in dismembering and preparing the sheep carcass. In the local café, men gather to meet their friends from the *houma*, play cards, smoke a *chicha*¹¹⁹. At home or in the café, the television will often be on: the scene is set for a *coup médiatique*, a media event, to focus attention on the life of the Nation. As the British royal family has come to make use of the mass-media at Christmas for a focus-broadcast weaving together Christian morality with national sentiment and symbols, so the Tunisian presidency has made use of Muslim religious holidays, in addition to secular national holidays, to maintain and strengthen its public profile.

The analysis of media text and image, so far in this thesis, has been thematic, focusing on process, participants and places, lexical categories and the use of figures and images. This concluding section takes an event in the oukala story in isolation - the presidential visit to the Borj Boulahia dwellings on 10 May 1995, and focuses on the *La Presse* report of the event and a major article, 'La femme est mère de l'humanité' ('Woman is mother of humanity') from the Tunisian newsmagazine *L'Observateur*, n°21, week of 17 to 23 May 1995, pp.10-11. Essentially, this is a report based on an interview with an agèd, blind, infirm resident of the oukala, on Jallal Ben Arfa, on the day he is to be rehoused. Through a detailed exploration / analysis of this French language text, taken in context with the other reporting of the visit, I hope to reach an understanding of the social semiotics at work in this portrait of State intervention. Underlying this report of an instance of a single citizen receiving the support (*sanad*) of the male-led Nation, there is a complex web of meaning, based on the twin threads of deprivation and solidarity. The

¹¹⁹ *chicha*: water pipe

storyline is of course familiar to the readers and viewers of the Tunisian mass-media; what is new here, in a bid to attract public attention, is the in-depth focus on a particular individual.

This concluding section to the analysis of media coverage of the oukala issue will thus attempt to deconstruct the two page article taken as a whole, using an approach in part derived from Gunther Kress' analysis of a page of the Daily Express¹²⁰. First of all, however, fast-rewind to the immediate reporting of the presidential visit. The sample report is from *La Presse de Tunisie*, 11 May 1995, front page / p.4. A detailed descriptive analysis is provided as a prelude to the personalised article from *L'Observateur*.

5.6.1 'Pour que la joie soit totale'

'So that joy may be complete', runs the headline. Under this is a block of text accompanied by a photograph of the President, listening to a mother, holding a child in her right arm, and a plate of food. The President, besuited, looking down towards the shorter woman, appears to be listening, an expression of concern on his face. Sub-titles to the article are:

- President Ben Ali shares the Aïd festival with families of modest condition at Borj Boulahia (above headline)
- The Head of State decides to have the inhabitants of an unfit (*vétuste*) oukala benefit from decent housing (below headline, left of photo)

The whole article occupies the space normally reserved in *La Presse* (and *Le Temps* for that matter) for the presidential activities of the previous day, generally with an image of the President behind his desk, receiving ministers or foreign dignitaries. On this occasion, the photo is however much larger than is usual, providing a break with the daily standard image. It is clearly what the buyer / reader will spot first. As a number of commentators have noted, regarding photographs in the print media, the photographs have a stronger 'fact value' than language.

The headline, 'Pour que la joie soit totale', has a strong religious connotation for the educated Francophone reader. Beethoven's Hymn to Joy, in French, contains the line 'Pour que la joie demeure ...' ('So that joy may remain ...') and the title of the piece immediately sets the article, published the day following the Muslim festival of Aïd El Adha, in a religious frame of reference. (Whether most Tunisian readers would get the reference is another matter). The important point is that the writer is setting the Presidential actions of the story firmly in an atmosphere of spirituality.

I now give a brief idea of the storyline of 'Pour que la joie soit totale' - followed by an examination of the expressions of agency in the report. The event may be summarised very simply: the President visited the oukala, talked to the residents, asking about their 'social and family situation' and their health; he decided that these residents were to have decent housing, and that a park (*une zone verte*) was to replace the demolished buildings. He recommended that the sick and infirm receive particular attention. Meals were given to the residents and sheep sacrificed. The writer concludes by saying that all this took place in a festive atmosphere 'illustrating the values of solidarity and fraternity between members of the national community.' The second (p.4) half of the story is accompanied by a photograph of the President in profile kneeling before a blind old man wearing jacket and *chéchia*, the national red felt cap now generally only worn by older, poorer men - and the dancers of the national folklore troop.

I count 25 verbal forms in the article; of these verbs, the most frequent agent was the President (15 occurrences), in the case of both transactive verbs and mental process verbs. Oukala residents were the agents in three occurrences (*vivait, ils vivent, ils occupent*), while relationals ('x is y') accounted for five verbs all with the unfit buildings as subject. There are two passive forms. Of the verb forms of which the President is agent, only four concern an actual physical action ('participated in the festival', 'visited the families', 'enquired about their situation', 'conversed with the inhabitants'). The remaining 11 are all mental process verbs ('noting', 'learned about', etc - seven examples) or decisional verbs ('recommended', 'decided' - four examples).

All attention in the article is thus focused on the President as agent, visiting, making contact, noting, giving orders for action. He is the sole responsible actor - the residents are subjects of non-transactives. However, a number of transactives take abstract nouns as their objects: 'the interest he bears', 'the values, the consecration of which the President attends to ...', 'he recommended that all the necessary interest be accorded'. The

evaluative adjective 'necessary' attached to the abstract noun means the question of who actually evaluates the extent of what needs to be done can be neatly sidestepped.

What then of the lexical categories in this report? The President is referred to with the usual range of official terms, the people concerned are 'residents', 'citizens', 'families of modest condition, some are 'aged and sick persons'. The convention, as has been seen before, is not to name individuals in these shorter reports. More interesting, however, is the lexicalisation of the built environment: the term *oukala*, originally used solely of multioccupancy dwellings in the Médina, is here transferred to 'a set of unsafe premises', also described as *abris* ('shelters') in the article, lacking 'indispensable facilities' close to the Olympic Village. The 'difficult conditions' make this 'a zone of extreme poverty in the middle of a modern residential quarter on the edge of the capital.'

It is at this point that reader local knowledge becomes important for the interpretation of this newspiece. The Olympic Village can by no means be seen as 'on the edge of the capital'. But as anyone going up to the Ariana (a major northern residential area) or a sporting event at the main stadium will know, it is located close to Menzah I, a well-established, up-market residential area. In fact the *oukala* in question was located just behind the Law School of the University of Tunis II, at the southwestern corner of the Zone urbaine nord, home to development banks, As-Sabah press group, and two prestige projects, the Cité des sciences, (complete with planetarium) and the INSAT, the national applied science institute. The contrast 'modern residential quarter / 'zone of extreme poverty' is thus an ideological one. The majority of Tunisian viewers or readers could not be expected to have any knowledge of this kind.

In fact, the article is probably more interesting for what it does not say. This is apparent if we focus on certain lexical items, namely the terms *intérêt* (interest) *amélioration* (improvement) and *consécration*. The President, in this piece, shows 'particular interest for their health', marks 'the interest he has for the improvement of the living conditions of these citizens' and recommends 'that the required interest be accorded to the situation of the aged and infirm persons.' But what does it actually mean for the President to show interest? We also learn that he recommends that the inhabitants get good housing. The whole process, however, remains opaque. Who is to undertake the 'improvement'. If the reader skims the article, it all seems very simple; in fact a complete future operation disappears behind a display of paternalist interest. We have no idea about how many people are involved, their status (families with numerous children? isolated old people,

jobless / employed?). The nub of the argument, (surprisingly if one is used to the inverted pyramid style of the English press) comes at the end. The inhabitants receive meals and sheep are sacrificed (agentless passive verbs, how all this was set up remains outside the scope of the piece), in a festive atmosphere, 'illustrating values of solidarity and fraternity'; there then follows an awkward clause, the sense of which runs that the Head of State attends to the *consécration* of these values. The term originally signifies 'vowing to God', of course; the semantic resonance of the word links back to the religious nature of the day chosen for the visit, and hence to the national symbolic environment.

If I have gone into this short piece in such detail it is to better contrast it with a life story at the Borj Boulahia oukala as recounted by Si Jalloul, one of the 'aged and ill persons'. I can but speculate about the background to the visit (How does the Palace go about preparing the ground for these occasions? The need for security obviously reduces a lot of the spontaneity). How did the writer (unidentified) prepare this account? Did it originate in the Palace press office or the Ministry of Information? Whatever, in the preceding analysis I have attempted to emphasize the prevalence of certain syntactic and lexical forms in producing a reduced account of a well-staged media event. Simplifying the complexity of an argument and limiting the terms which it can contain is powerful State intervention. The less information available, the less coherent and critical public debate can be, the less people can think for themselves.

5.6.2 A magazine page: a visual and textual enactment of neo-patriarchy

Late May 1995, Tunisian newsmagazine *L'Observateur / El Moulahidh* ran a two page interview / reportage piece on one of the inhabitants of the Borj Boulahia oukala. This particular magazine has a cover largely in Arabic - top left, next to the magazine name, is the photograph of the President and the blind man. Title in Arabic, 'Ben Ali: support for those who have no means of support'. On opening the magazine, the reader will find that this is the title of the week's lead editorial, by one Abou Bakr Seghir, which mentions the individual citizen whose story is to be developed in the two page report:

And perhaps one of the moments of the visit which had the most impact on people's minds [was] the spontaneous dialogue between the Head of State and the old blind man who spoke with all sincerity and frankness; he was an eloquent

model of the relationship of sincerity [existing] between the leader and his people.
L'Observateur, 17-23 May 1995, editorial, p.1

The article about the visit, however, is in French, and the same photograph from the cover is repeated, twice - once in full, once just the profile of the blind man, now named as Si Jalloul, the interviewee whose words and wisdom are the raw material of the two page piece.

I have chosen to focus on this piece simply because it is one of the best written of the whole corpus, in that in terms of detail and content it comes closest to satisfying what a reader would expect of a well-produced newsmagazine. It provides a good counterpoint to the other reporting of the symbolic visit of 10 May 1995, and a very personal, though journalistically mediated, insight into the lifeworld of an oukala resident. While the 'we group' bonds are strengthened by this text, the many leitmotifs of the national solidarity narrative are reiterated - but with more subtlety and contradiction than in many other Tunisian media texts. This is the impact of policy on a fragile life, and hints of opposition appear.

The article is one in a series entitled *L'oreille en coin* (lit. 'The ear in the corner'). 'Woman is the mother of humanity' declares the title. Under it, in italics, a third of a page introducing the article - background and reminder of the role of the Head of State in having the people of Borj Boulahia moved. Then into the story: an anecdote about some children who wanted to steal from the old man, a sketch of his life; how he would have liked to marry, his respect for women, his friendships in the neighbourhood, youth today and colonial times - and a section entitled 'Farewell to the oukala'. The article concludes with Si Jalloul in the *délégué's*¹²¹ car:

'The Head of State wants you to sleep in the warm tonight' says the *délégué*.
 'Long live Ben Ali', cry the inhabitants of the oukala, who, they too, in turn will henceforth sleep in the warm and in good conditions.

A story that ends happily ever after. How is it constructed? How does the writer transmit his meaning?

¹²¹ *délégué*: Tunisian local government official, the representative of the *gouverneur*. A governorate is subdivided into *délégations*.

Compared with the ordinary reporting analysed earlier on, this piece is unusual for its portrayal of an individual in such detail. Other agents present include the Head of State, his representative the *délégué*, the people of the oukala (very much as background extras), all Tunisians, and 'we' the journalist. The 'colonists' (*les colons*) are mentioned, as is Sassia, 'a neighbour who helped [Si Jalloul] greatly during his life in the oukala. Also mentioned are the children of the oukala and 'la Femme'.

The article draws attention with its headline, 'Woman is mother of humanity'. (My first reaction was that this was yet another pieced on the 'gains' of Tunisian women since independence). On reading the article, the line turns out to be taken from a lengthy paragraph on Si Jalloul's views on women:

'Women (original version, *la femme*) work hard and I have a lot of esteem for them. What would humanity be without them? She is the mother of humanity'. Si Jalloul has a particular tenderness towards rural women who work hard and much more than men. 'It musn't be forgotten that they get up at 4 am to clean the house before going to the fields. Without them men can't live', he says.

Similar home-spun philosophy is included on the Arabs and the time before independence:

To the Arabs, Si Jalloul would say: 'May God help you to unite and go down the right road.'

...

He remembers the hard life during colonial times and just after independence. 'We would queue up for a whole day just to obtain bread during the colonial period. Today we're spoiled, people are never happy', he points out.

These are opinions which do not in any way contradict the status quo. They fit perfectly with the dominant State morality. The quote about women can be read as bearing, like a watermark, justification for the various advances (some would say concessions) which have been made to women over the last forty years in terms of rights in Tunisia.

But as Si Jalloul is also shown as being profoundly traditional. This impression is created by the expression of what western authors have viewed as a certain 'Islamic fatalism'. Si

Jalloul makes use of religious formulae (which practically all Tunisians do without being any more fatalistic than the average European):

'May God protect Ben Ali', he says with enthusiasm, while raising his hands to the Heavens to be better heard by the Almighty.

...

But Si Jalloul regrets nothing. He accepts life as it is and believes in destiny.

Although this text takes an 'ordinary citizen' for its focus, and recounts his life in a series of short, terse sentences at the start of the article, the openness of this everyday story is in fact illusory. Si Jalloul in fact becomes a mouthpiece for consensus opinions. The friend of children and adults alike in the oukala, ('all the inhabitants of the oukala come to chat or drink a good *thé noir* in his company'), he is a worthy recipient of State largesse.

The personification of State action in the generous Head of State is thus the central theme of this story, not how a man has coped with deprivation and disability. At the beginning of the article, we read that:

Si Jalloul, like all the inhabitants of the oukala, will remember all his life the generosity, affection, tenderness and humanism of the President.

Si Jalloul heartily thanks President Ben Ali, who is always close to citizens, for his gesture.

At the end of the article, the theme appears again:

Si Jalloul especially gathers up the new clothes which President Ben Ali has given

...

'The Head of State wants you to sleep in the warm this evening', says the *délégué*

And accompanying the photograph, on the second page, the caption:

'I heartily thank President Ben Ali for having allowed me to obtain a decent house'

Our ordinary citizen is thus very much a person in debt to the representative of the State, initiator of action described as follows in the opening editorial in Arabic:

For Ben Ali identified the situation, made clear the causes and responsibilities and put forward the appropriate solution in a civilisational¹²² form, the basis of which is the feeling of sincere love which the President bears towards all members of his people, for he is the dutiful son, the compassionate father, the one who bears the cares of those with cares.

David Chaney¹²³, in a discussion of news ('the discourse of actuality'), notes that 'a commitment to accident is a theme of journalistic practice'. Mouldi M'barek, author of the article on Si Jalloul, manages to maintain a spontaneous feel ('Chance would have it that we met him on Saturday 13 May towards 7.30 pm. At 8 pm the *délégué* from the Cité El Khadhra came to take him to the house he [now] benefits from'). The discussion of this chance meeting is kept lively with anecdote, detail (Si Jalloul likes *hallouzi*¹²⁴, the poor man's cigarette), and interjection ('You're off Si Jalloul' says a small child).

This lively, all-recording reporter's gaze means that Mouldi also notes a certain reticence to the move:

Curiously, all the inhabitants of the oukala were both happy and sad at the same time. Happy because they will be living in decent housing, but nevertheless sad to leave the oukala, where certain among them have spent thirty years of their life. The children and even certain parents were born there. Man in search of his past! You can say what you like about this oukala, for its inhabitants, it still represents a good part of their lives.

¹²² *civilisationnel*: the term probably only exists in Tunisian French usage, and is used extensively in official rhetoric. Several informants felt that it was a neologism dating from the Mzali government (early 1980s), when Arabisation was extensively promoted and there was a return to Arab-Muslim values, in official discourse, in an attempt to prevent to Islamic Fundamentalist movement from gaining ground. The French *civilisationnel* has *hadhari* as its Arabic equivalent.

¹²³ Chaney, David (1993) *Fictions of Collective Life: public drama in late modern culture* London: Routledge, p.130

¹²⁴ *hallouzi*: the cigarette brand name has passed into every day Tunisian usage to denote something cheap or badly finished.

But this is only a short passage in the article. With regard to the resident group, a sense of community is just hinted at. How these inhabitants survived prior to the visit of Aïd el Adha 1995 remains outside the narrative, which ultimately is the portrayal of a paternalist solution. Mouldi M'barek (and the editorialist writer of 'Support for those who have no support') produced text which makes this approach to resolving deprivation 'appear both inevitable and just'¹²⁵. The writing would seem to presuppose a passive acceptance, a lack of critical awareness on the part of the readership. But in Tunisia, as elsewhere, news is increasingly diversified, available from a range of sources:

Si Jalloul often listens to the radio. He knows the programmes of all the channels. He likes to listen to the news.

Oukala people can be as aware of what is going on as anyone. No doubt they were not surprised by the news stories constructed around their home after the visit. In the personal encounter between Si Jalloul and Ben Ali, an individual representative of the people and its president, the symbolic representation of national solidarity is maintained. These pages from *L'Observateur* convey meanings about power and participation, capacity to act and deprivation. My attention to the details of the text has attempted to bring out the linguistic and iconographic 'how' of this enactment of neo-patriarchy. Perhaps the ultimately conventional symbolism is unsurprising in the context of the Tunisian media - my analysis may do little more than demonstrate a skill at rethinking a text, rearranging its semantic blocks. More surprising, however, are the contradictions of the everyday rehousee world as presented in the next chapter. But first, as a conclusion, a look at what happened to the site of Borj Boulahia ... and a visit to a national exhibition, a site where images of solidarity circulate.

5.6.3 The Garden of Tolerance ... and a visit to an exhibition

The municipal demolition team went to work quickly in May 1995. The national TV company's weekly magazine, *Al-'idha'a wa at-talfaza*¹²⁶, showed the bulldozers moving

¹²⁵ Golding, P. (1981) 'The missing dimensions - news media and the management of social change' in E. Katz and T. Szecsko (eds) *Mass Media and Social Change* London: Sage, p.63 quoted in Chaney, D. (ibid, note 4) p.131

¹²⁶ *Al-'idha'a wa at-talfaza*, week of 20 May 1995, n°912

into action on its cover (along with the now widely used photograph of Si Jalloul and the President):

Is it possible - as His Excellency the President noted, in the utmost surprise - that these families should have remained waiting for appropriate housing since the floods of 1969?

On presidential orders, the work was to be completed by the following Monday:

And after only three days, we saw on the 8 pm news, last Sunday evening, scenes from the demolition operation in the *harry* of Borj Boulahia which will be transformed into a green zone, just as we saw views of the new houses, which have been made available to the families who were living in Borj Boulahia, and conversations with some of the inhabitants.

In early 1997, I went to find the former site of the oukala. The small plot behind the Law and Economics Faculty is now a sort of garden. Neat blue plaques with white lettering proclaim that this is the Garden of Tolerance, *Le jardin de la tolérance*. Narrow gravel walkways set with benches lead between clipped shrubs and rustic wood fencing. On bright winter days, the students - or perhaps office workers from the nearby development banks - can sit here to enjoy the sun. The name fits nicely with the new toponymy of the Centre urbain nord. The nearest metro station is 12 August 1947, date of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; beyond the tower blocks and the deep-blue sphere of the Cité des sciences runs the Boulevard de l'environnement. Next to this urban motorway, just by the Foyer Caravelle, stands a large, brightly painted statue of Labib, the fennec fox, all sky blue dungarees and pointy ears, mascot of the national environmental awareness campaign. There is nothing in the garden to recall the oukala, once an Italian colon's farmstead, then a refuge for flood victims. The problem conditions of those people was resolved ('The promise and the achievement' as the TV magazine headlined). The national development discourse remains inscribed in the streetscape, there to be 'read' by a researcher piecing together fragments of a narrative. The next chapter moves on to look at individual agents' experience of being part of such a narrative. The namings of locality will be seen to figure strongly in this experience.

And Si Jalloul? The image of the President and the blind man was to continue in wide use for several years after the visit. For the tenth anniversary of 'the Change' (7

November 1997), a large exhibition of a decade's achievements was organised in Tunis city centre: the central promenade of the avenue Bourguiba was roofed over, and along this artificial corridor, a series of thematic displays was set up, complete with scale models of new buildings and dams, posters with tables, graphs and figures, TV screens showing the Presidential visits abroad and dummies in national costume. Halfway along the arcade, a display of the achievements of the National Solidarity Fund, photos of rural women ululating as the President arrives, and at the centre, the President and Si Jalloul in life size cut-out. To the right is a similar cut-out of the President listening to a woman in rural dress. To the left, a panel explaining what the four Arabic letters spelling Tunis really stand for (in national rhetoric): *ta* for *tadhamun*, 'solidarity', *waw* for *wafa'*, 'loyalty', *nun* for *namw*, 'development' and *sin* for *sa'adat al-muwatin*, 'the happiness of the citizen'.

5.7 Endpiece: House plans from the new estates

Figure 3: (Below) Model house plan, Khaled Ibn el Walid Estate. Douar Hicher (1991). Two rooms plus toilet, corridor/kitchen and back courtyard. (65 m² total area, 45 m² covered.) Note that the front door (on the left) opens directly onto the street.

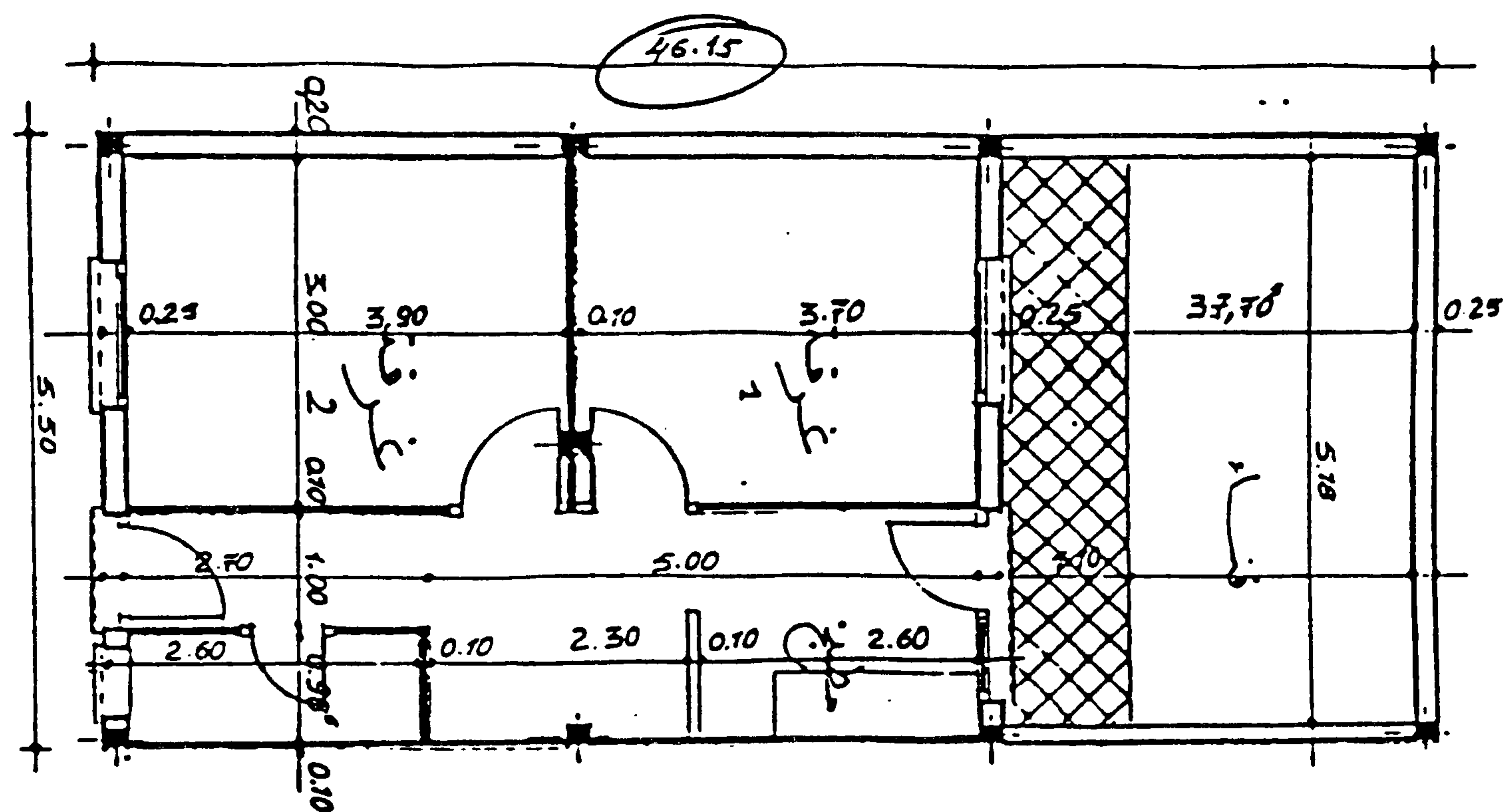
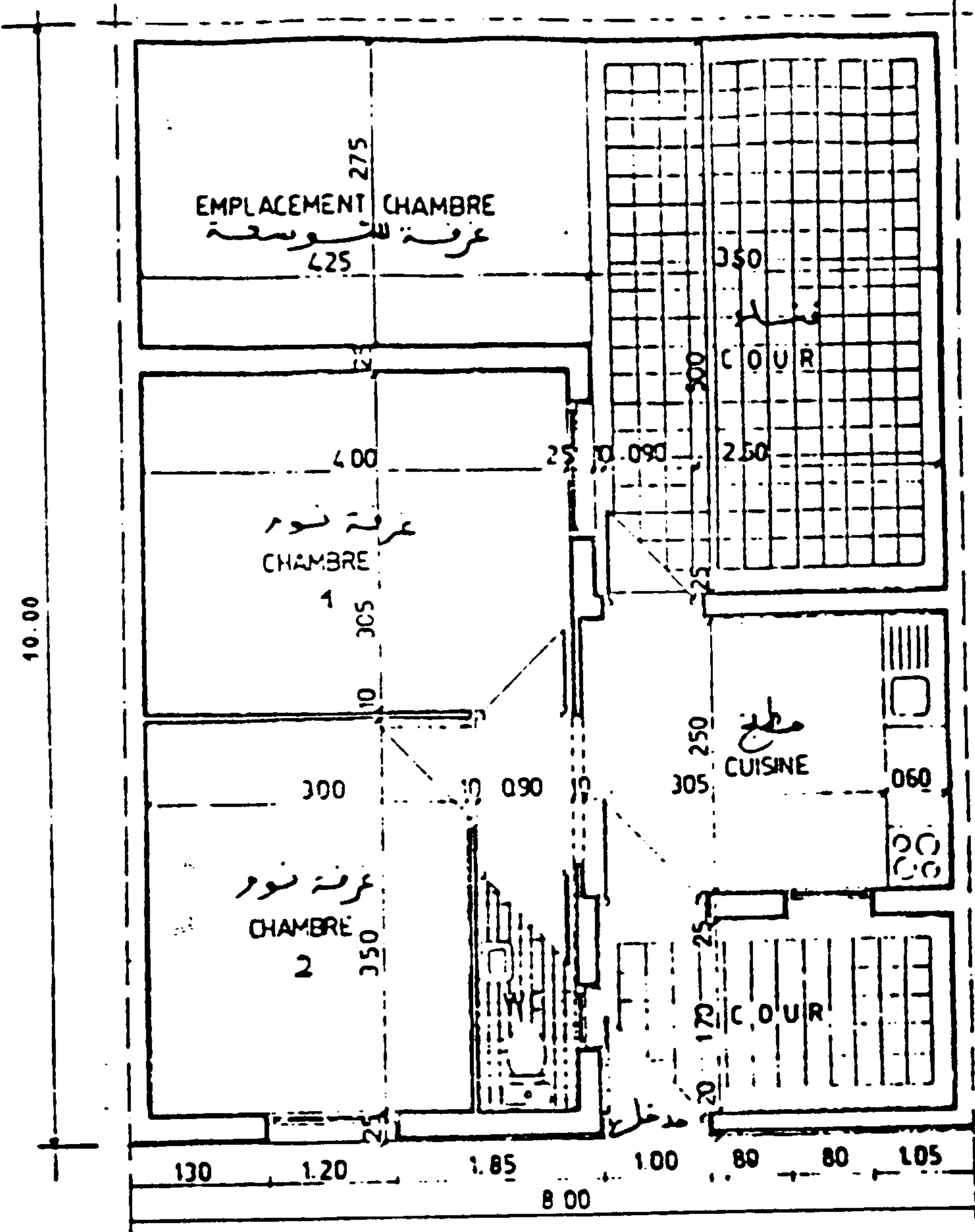


Figure 4: (Below) Model house plan, El Mechtel and Sidi Hassine Estates. (1992 and 1994). Two rooms plus toilet and a large back courtyard with site for third ground floor room (*emplacement chambre*). (80 m² total area, 43 m² covered). Note small 'area' separating front door from street – often used as site of stairs when extensions are built on.



6

WORDS FROM THE CITY: THE THEN AND NOW OF THE OUKALA PROJECT

6.1 Beginnings - background to the tales outside the media

"The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when ... the speaker appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic expressive intention. Prior to this ... the word does not exist in a neutral or impersonal language ... rather it exists in other people's mouths, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word and make it one's own" Mikhaïl Bakhtin, 1981: 293-4¹

The present chapter, "Words from the city" grew out of a hunch. Sometime in 1993, after I had begun assembling material on the Oukala Project, I found myself wondering whether the operation would live up to the hopes and expectations of the rehousees. My father's remarks, those of a general practitioner, about the difficulties of working with the up-rooted, destructured Liverpooldian communities in Runcorn-New Town in the late 1970s / 1980s, and the remarks of a housing professional who had knowledge of Tunisia - plus a desire the escape analysis based on written text - made me want to see how the project had worked out in more practical terms. In early 1991, I had visited a number of oukalas in the Médina with the ASM building inspection team whose task was to identify houses unfit for habitation. I was left with an impression of hope (and hopelessness), but also a sense that people had structured ways of getting by, making the most of their locational advantage in the city centre. Several of the women presented themselves to the inspection team as 'muqawilat tandhif' (cleaning contractors) in banks and offices. While some families were clearly living in absolute poverty - I will never forget the father with nine children in a small, dank first floor room in an oukala on an alley hard by the Palazzo Cardoso near Bab

¹ Bakhtin, Mikhaïl (1981 [1935]) *The Dialogic Imagination* ed M. Halqvist, trans C. Emerson and M. Halqvist Austin: University of Texas Press

B'har - others had consumer goods, HiFi, maybe a Vespa scooter, pressure cookers and TV sets. All that was missing was some sort of access to housing finance. One cleaning operative, a woman in her late forties, showed us her room the walls of which were covered with photos of herself. She had worked as a dancer in her spare time, and received money from a son working in Germany. In another *oukala* on the rue du Trésor, a transvestite, dressed in cleaning lady's housecoat, head covered in brightly coloured scarf and wearing plastic flipflops and thick socks went round the courtyard banging on the doors: "The *baladiya*'s² here". And he explained what was going on to the inhabitants of the *oukala*.

The overriding impression was of poverty in dank, decaying housing. On the rue des Limonadiers, we spoke to a carpenter to gain access to the upper floor of an apartment building inhabited by two ancient Italian brothers, former master builders. (The carpenter had a workshop on the groundfloor. Stuck to a board on the wall along with bills and clients orders was a photograph, perhaps from the 1940s, of two handsome young men all dressed up for an evening in La Goulette or the Belvédère). Upstairs was a smell of cats and decaying food. The carpenter knocked and opened the door. One of the brothers, tiny, fragile, came along the corridor. "Viva Ben Ali!, Viva la Tunisia!", he repeated over and over again when he understood that this was an official inspection. The other brother lay on a metal frame bed in a bare room, covered with a rough blanket; a tiny radio clutched to his ear. When we left, the fissures and rising damp duly noted, the carpenter said that they had worked on "half the buildings of the capital".

This *oukala* was later demolished, and the brothers taken to the Italian community *asile* in Hammam Lif. The carpenter described how the area had never recovered "from when they knocked down Borj Ali Raïs, and the people from there came to live in the quarter... in the old days people would put chairs out in the street and pots of basil. They can't do that now."

Another fragment. A visit with an English friend to the zaouia of Sidi Abdel Kader on the rue du Divan on a cold day in spring 1991. The plaque on the wall to right of the entrance said that a restoration of the building had been completed in 1986. (The plaque is still there). Two excited, smiling children insisted I took their photograph next to the zaouia door. Inside damp washing hung on lines strung between the pillars. Tiles were coming off the wall. In a room (the former prayer hall?), a young woman, barely twenty perhaps, a baby wrapped in a blanket on a piece of carpet on

² *baladiya* - the Municipality

the floor and two lads, also about twenty. They sat round an open fire. Y.B. and I chatted with them a while. They were articulate, aware. Poverty and poor literacy do not mean stupidity and ignorance, of course.

So many fragments, discussions, at the café, in the souk, after a concert, in the hammam. Phrases come back, events recalled by a photo, or a walk along a familiar street. A new zaouia to Sidi Abdel Kader now exists at Bab Souika, built to replace the one demolished as part of the restructuring operation undertaken in the late 1980s. The other zaouia, on the rue du Divan, at the time of writing (early 1997) was being restored once more.

The present chapter draws on field notes, fragments of memory and some official documents and statistics to explore narratives of the Oukala Project beyond the grand narrative presented in the Tunisian print media. In the preceding section, I tried to analyse how an urban problem, sub-standard housing, is represented as an objective worthy of attention and action at the highest level. I examined the words and images that constitute the official rhetoric of the multioccupancy issue, establishing it a particular, distinctive problem. Through media representations, the issue acquires a national status. In the present section, I move away from the macronarrative to the micronarratives of everyday experience - corridor conversations, chats in the street, at the gym, in someone's home - alternative, non-public representations by people, of people concerned with the project or effected by it. In this way, I hope a different set of representations of the social and spatial relations related to the demolition / rehousing programme will emerge. At the end of this chapter I suggest that the simplifying preoccupations of media and planner discourse are ultimately detrimental to the rehousees. A more empowering approach would set the former oukala inhabitants in the wider context of urban society. A move from the present focus on the treatment of physical housing issues as a solution to problems is no doubt long overdue.

6.2 A methodological detour

There may be a correspondence between a life as lived, a life as experienced, and a life as told, but the anthropologist should never assume the correspondence or fail to make the distinction between them. E.M. Bruner³

In trying to sort and reassemble the interview material about the Oukala Project, I wanted to avoid creating a sort of typology of cases. Rather, I was aiming to examine the constructs and categories used by the interviewees themselves, as well as those featuring in some of the related material. These are what Strauss (1987: 33-34⁴, quoted in Alasuutari 1995: 67⁵), refers to as *in vivo* codes 'as opposed to sociological constructs.' The aim is to reveal the distinctions contained in the text, how phenomena such as housing and neighbourhood are contained in the words people use. I will attempt to mention as many diverse and relevant examples. In this way the reader can judge and form an impression about the picture which I have tried to create. As a selective observer of a rehousing project, I was interested in how a range of viewpoints and experiences of the rehousing project emerge - but not in whether they are 'true' or 'false'.

Nor have I adopted a narrow concept of 'worthwhile information' in the process of assembling the elements for this chapter - as is quite clear from the diversity of themes treated. Broadly speaking, as I talked to people involved in the Oukala Project, I was interested in information about their lived experience and their ways of behaviour; I was also interested in the meanings people gave to experience and action, in their motives and representations. Through my background reading on the Project, plus a good command of the local language, I felt I had skill to build up a rapport with rehousees in informal conversations, as well as with the wider spread of professionals (housing officers, a lawyer, social workers, NGO personnel, etc) beyond the original core of architects with whom I had discussed (mainly) the physical planning side of

³ Bruner, E.M. (1984) 'The opening up of anthropology' in E.M. Bruner (ed) *Text, play and story: the construction and reconstruction of self and society*, p.7 Washington, DC: American Anthropological Society, pp.1-16

⁴ Strauss, Anselm L. (1990) *Basics of qualitative research: grounded theory procedures and techniques* Newbury Park, CA: Sage

⁵ Alasuutari, Pertti (1995) *Researching Culture: qualitative methods and cultural studies* London: Sage

the operation. In many ways, I had become part of the human environment of the ASM, the institution in which the identification of the oukalas and processing of the inhabitants was undertaken. The rapport and knowledge I developed (and the range of people I discussed the issues with) made lying and invention on the whole improbable - where there were obvious contradictions, I point this out. However, as Alasuutari (1995: 52⁶) puts it:

It is almost impossible to assess whether the picture an individual gives about his or her personality and mental life is reliable.

I collected fragments of conversations, wrote up interviews, wrote 'home' to myself with numerous memos - notes on experiences and chats - and often received information which seemed odd and occasionally contradictory: language was often opaque, whether any 'truth' was emerging was a source of doubt. But then exaggeration, opacity, areas of flanneling came to seem interesting in themselves, further folds in the social fabric. Details can be hidden, remain unmentioned in the course of a conversation for a variety of reasons, professionals do not necessarily know the whole story. Nor could I endlessly probe, take people's time, ask simple questions the answers which were in part known to me - problems such as this are part of any fieldwork experience, as Paul Rabinow discusses in his *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*⁷. I was, however, able to draw on the local knowledge of the rehousees and ask about lifestyle, before and after the move. The result, I feel, is to bring forth views which challenge the official version.

The approach I have adopted in the present chapter is what Alasuutari (1995: 63ff⁸) refers to as the *specimen approach*, where 'a specimen as a form of research material is not treated as either a *statement about* or a *reflection of* reality; instead, a specimen is seen as a *part of* the reality being studied. The interest then is how the story is being conveyed in the personal or other narrative or text under scrutiny, "whether it be true, honest talk or mere fabrication" (Alasuutari: *ibid*⁹). The following analytic sub-chapters thus focus on how different types of discourse related to the multi-occupancy

⁶ Alasuutari (note 5)

⁷ Rabinow, Paul (1977) *Reflections on fieldwork in Morocco* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press□

⁸ Alasuutari (note

⁹ Alasuutari (note 5)

housing question are related to each other to provide certain representations of society.

I thus bring three sets of data, or three types of account to bear in the present chapter: the tales of the rehousees, accounts from the world of the architects and housing professionals, and finally, personal writing, 'biographical, situational thick descriptions [to] recreate the sights, sounds, and feelings of persons and places' (Denzin 1989: 93-94¹⁰). In this way, I will be able to incorporate the actual context of interaction with interviewees, even where there is no actual conversation going on. Hence, two further sources of data are built into this chapter: excerpts from planning documents and statistics drawn from raw data on the Oukala Project. As in the previous chapter on policy representations in the Tunisian press, the aim is in part to explore 'how linguistic choices and practices construct reality, how they bracket off alternative solutions and create commitment to certain thought patterns' (Alasuutari 1995: 100¹¹).

One final introductory remark about this qualitative data. Like the professionals, the families and individuals concerned by the Oukala Project are diverse in their responses to the move, some making a go of the new area, others just surviving, hoping for something better for their children. Some were highly critical of the State initiative - even if they were basically happy with the opportunity of a new home - and so to maintain confidentiality, any personal names have been changed or removed in cases where I take people's words to illustrate a point.

6.3 Some statistics - and a note on place names

It emerged very quickly as I began to study the oukala policy in depth that there was no report based on the detailed analysis of the data available on the rehoused populations. On a number of occasions, I asked planners and housing officers to what extent they were able to satisfy the demand to get out of sub-standard accomodation in the Médina. There was no clear answer to this question, rather different 'orientations' on this issue, for example, that:

¹⁰ Denzin, Norman K. (1989) *Interpretative interactionism* (Applied social research methods, vol. 16) Newbury Park, CA: Sage

¹¹ Alasuutari (note 5)

- the departments and agencies concerned knew the terrain through older reports;
- that experience was felt to be crucial in the rehousing process;
- that 'people' alerted the Municipal social services in cases of need;
- that a good job was being done, under the circumstances;
- that there was an ambition to continue the project into a fourth phase;
- that 'the problems never finish - I can't see any end to it' (words of a social worker)

As noted above (section 4.4), the data currently available on the oukala populations is rather limited. In internal policy documents, there is some data on the target populations¹², and in a 1995 report¹³ (which I did not obtain until early 1998), there were some statistics on the rehoused populations. These were in all likelihood based on extensive raw data, held by the Municipal Social Welfare Department, on the households moved out to the first two estates. (At the time I was collecting information, early 1997, the last estate's set of data was incomplete). Therefore, in order to provide myself with some sort of quantitative background to the interview material, in July / August 1997, I did some simple processing on the data for Douar Hicher and El Agba households using the Excel 5.0 package, thereby producing a statistical representation of the rehoused populations which could well have existed had the Municipality had more staff and equipment. Essentially what follows is a more detailed version of the information contained in the 1995 *Mashru' al-oukayil: al-natai'j wa afak al-mustaqbal*.

The raw data provided no information on household origins / Médina accomodation. Rather details had been compiled, for each new household, of:

- household head: sex, date of birth & regional origin, occupation and income;
- other household income (figure);
- number of children (5 to 14, m / f, in / out of education;
- number of adolescents 15 to 19, m / f, in / out of education;
- number of adults 20 to 39, m / f, in / out of education or employed / jobless;
- number of adults 40 to 59, m / f, in / out of education or employed / jobless;
- number of adults over 60, m / f.

¹² See for example ASM (1995) *Projet Oukalas (troisième tranche)* March 1995, pp.21

□

¹³ ASM (1995) *Mashru' al-oukayil: al-natai'j wa afak al-mustaqbal* April 1995, pp.14 (text)

A certain number of problems arose with the categories, and the raw data turned out to be incomplete and inaccurate in certain respects. There had clearly been data entry problems in the figures for El Agba regarding household income: on occasion head of household and household income was given as being the same (perhaps it was, perhaps it was just an error). Both sets of tables left out head of household from the figures for adults proper, so these had to be entered in the appropriate place on the chart; there were also numerous gaps in the regional origins and occupation statistics. However, the formal income and occupation data is perhaps only of relative importance, given the different ways of getting by which the estate people resort to. The issue is further explored below.

As regards categories, occupation was problematic, and it was not possible to distinguish between employed and self-employed for the craft occupations. Nor was it possible to gain an accurate idea of the skill status of certain categories - between 'company employee' (*employé de société*) and 'functionary' (*fonctionnaire*), for example, which could cover a multitude of possibilities from the lowly *chaouch* (doorman) to jobs with significant responsibility. Nor was it clear to what extent certain families were benefitting from NGO, Municipal or other assistance.

What is surprising, in all this, is not so much the various inaccuracies / holes in the data, but the fact that no attempt had been made, five years on from the completion of the first phase rehousing, to use the data. Presumably, at this stage in the project, there is no need to refine and expand the information available as the policy process continues to function to the satisfaction of politicians and implementers.

Nevertheless, the data, once processed, do give a broad general picture of the social make-up of the new estates - which it would be interesting to compare with:

- (a) the households left in the Médina, and
- (b) other households already resident in the new areas.

A fully comprehensive analysis is probably impossible, given the constraints, in terms of time and equipment, on Municipal personnel. (During my interviews I was left with a very strong impression that professionals working on the project felt overwhelmed by the workload). Here, I have attempted to give an idea of a number of significant features, including:

- A. gender of head of household;
- B. household size;
- C. occupational categories;
- D. income.

From this broad data, certain conditions emerge as significant, and these receive more nuanced and direct, rehousee comment in the qualitative material of the rest of the chapter. I hope that some of this analysis will be useful to housing staff preparing for further policy developments.

A. Gender of head of household

A feature of the statistics which surprised me initially was the high percentage of women heads of household:

Gender (figure and %)	Khaled Ibn El Walid (1994)	El Mechtel (1992)
Female	111 (30 %)	142 (35 %)
Male	247 (70 %)	260 (65 %)
Total	358	402

Both estates had around a third women heads of household. At first sight, this seems very unusual for Tunisia. It could indicate one of two things:

- a) that there is a large number of households headed by women, either divorced, left effectively single or widowed;
- b) or that many families had deemed it preferable to register the new house in the name of the wife, possibly because the Social Services Department deemed the husband too unreliable.

In the absence of any further statistics, the issue remains open to speculation. I would favour a combination of the two sets of circumstances by way of an explanation.

B. Household size

In terms of household size, analysis showed households which on average seem on the small size, for Tunisia:

Number in household	Khaled Ibn El Walid (1992)	El Mechtel (1994)
Average	4.7	4.3
Mode	5	3

However, these figures need to be considered in the light of the full range of household sizes, as follows:

Number in household	Khaled Ibn El Walid (1992)	El Mechtel (1994)
1-2	47	86
3-5	194	206
6-7	84	74
8-11	33	36

Number in household (%)	Khaled Ibn El Walid (1992)	El Mechtel (1994)
1-2	13.13 %	21.39 %
3-5	54.19 %	51.24 %
6-7	23.46 %	18.41 %
8-11	09.22 %	8.96 %

In both estates, a small proportion of the rehoused population was living in conditions of extreme overcrowding, with 33 households at Douar Hicher and 36 at El Agba in

the 8 to 12 family members range. At Douar Hicher, given the smaller size of the units (60 m² with backyard / 42 m² covered), things must have been initially rather difficult. (For a family of seven, each individual has 6 m²; the covered area of 42 m² includes kitchen and corridor space as well as the two rooms). Even allowing that the older children may on occasion be 'farmed out' to relatives, it would be necessary for a growing family to build on quickly to ensure adequate sleeping space at the very least.

On the other hand, 13.3 % of families at Douar Hicher and 21.39 % at El Agba were in the 1-2 persons bracket, with perfectly adequate room space. A small number of these would be in studio-type accomodation, as each estate included a small number of single room accomodation.

C. Occupational structure

A look at the nomograms on occupational structure for heads of household (abbreviated here to hhs), shows unemployment at Douar Hicher (for the age range 20 to59), among women heads of household to be much higher than among men: 44.68 % versus 22.40 %. The figure was similar for El Agba: 50.55 % versus 21.75 %. Very few adults were in education: 2.7 % at Douar Hicher and 7.6 % at El Agba.

However, it is the statistics on types of employment which are most revealing:

Khaled Ibn El Walid (1992): Job status	Male head of household: number (%)	Female head of household: number (%)
Skilled	76 (30.77 %)	24 (21.62 %)
Unskilled	123 (49.80 %)	23 (20.72 %)
No formal employment	26 (10.53 %)	63 (56.76 %)
Retired	22 (8.91 %)	1 (0.90 %)

El Mechtel (1994): Job status	Male head of household: nnumber (%)	Female head of household: number (%)
Skilled	65 (24.90%)	8 (5.88 %)
Unskilled	126 (48.28 %)	53 (38.97 %)
No formal employment	34 (13.03 %)	74 (54.41 %)
Retired	36 (13.79 %)	1 (0.74 %)

For heads of household at Douar Hicher, only 30.77 % of men and 21.62 % of women are in skilled employment; at El Agba, the figures are worse: 24.90 % of men and 5.88 % of women are given as being in skilled employment. Looking at a detailed breakdown of job categories (presumably derived from the terminology used on individuals' national identity cards, the biggest categories at Douar Hicher are:

Khaled Ibn El Walid (1992): main job categories	Numbers
Day labourer (m)	89
Day labourer (f)	11
Inactive (m)	25
Inactive (f)	62
Worker (m)	34
Cleaner (f)	11
Total / Percentage	232 i.e. 64.8 %

Although only 87 heads of household are listed as inactive (24.3 %), the category 'day labourer' / *journalier* indicates irregular employment, while worker (*ouvrier*) and cleaner (*femme de ménage*) are at the bottom of the Tunisian salary scale. There are very few household heads with jobs which could be describes as being middle range. The image is one of a concentration of people with low-skill levels - and correspondingly low incomes.

D *Income categories*

It was difficult to produce a picture of income levels on the estates based on the figures given in the Municipal Social Welfare Department's tables. No doubt several people were involved in collecting data on rehouseable families - and to ensure rehousing at the cheapest rate, it would have been in families interest to avoid giving any impression of high incomes - hence certain irregularities on the tables below:

Khaled Ibn El Walid	Men	Women	El Mechtel	Men	Women
< 50	22	56	< 50	4	6
50-99	47	19	50-99	42	26
100-130	77	12	100-130	48	16
131-180	61	15	131-180	50	15
181-220	22	1	181-220	31	8
221-300	6	0	221-300	24	1
300+	2	1	300+	3	4
Assisted	3	2	Assisted	0	0
Unknown	8	5	Unknown	58	66
Total	248	111	Total	260	142

The main anomaly concerns female household income at Douar Hicher, where fully 50.45 % of women gave incomes of below 50 Dt / month - which could indicate (as discussed above) that the main breadwinner was the husband, but that it had been preferable to put the house in the wife's name. Or it could indicate lone-women heads of household with very irregular incomes. At the Cité El Mechtel, 1.54 % of men and 4.23 % of women have incomes of below 50 Dt / month, which would correspond to the small number of recognised *cas sociaux* ('social cases') rehoused and assisted by the Municipality.

Broadly speaking, however, in both estates, the vast majority of household heads had incomes of below 180 Dt (at Khaled Ibn El Walid, 83.47 % of men hhs and 91.89 % of women hhs; at El Mechtel, 55.38 % men and 44.30 % women). The figures for men and women at Khaled Ibn El Walid are similar - which would indicate that the high percentage of women hhs on under 50 Dt / month is not significant, and should perhaps be taken as 'very low and irregular income'. The Cité El Mechtel figure seems to be better - until one realises that fully 22.31 % of men and 46.48 % of women hhs incomes are unknown, i.e. the Department had no clear figures on income for 30.8 % of households.

In the case of both estates, only a tiny percentage of households were in the 221-300 Dt monthly income bracket, and the vast majority of these were overwhelmingly headed by men (first estate, 6.42 %, second estate, 9.70 %). Only three households at Khaled Ibn Walid and 7 at El Agba had lead incomes of more than 300 Dt / month. For a couple with two young children, life begins to get comfortable at the 300 Dt / month income threshold.

Given that the majority of families were poor, this brief statistical analysis reveals that there was a risk of two concentrations of extremely low-skilled, low-income people being created in the new rehousing estates, unless their economic situation was improved. There was a certain amount of help channelled to the new estates in the form of direct material help (mainly food and clothes parcels) and financial aid (for setting up small revenue generating projects), by the Municipal Social Welfare Department and the local RCD party office. There was no written documentation available on this. However, for people like those rehoused to make a go of life in the city, self-provisioning, exchange-provisioning and informal support networks are indispensable. The numbers crunched here give a broad, general indication of the social profile of the estates. The rest of this chapter tries to fill out this numerical sketch. What are the possibilities and problems faced by new residents? What

tensions emerge in my textual representation of life on these ideal - according to the press and planning documents - estates?

Before turning to these accounts of the new domestic landscape, far from the dank oukalas, a brief recap on some of the place names seems useful:

There are three rehousing estates:

1. Khaled Ibn El Walid at Douar Hicher (finished 1992)
2. El Mechtel at El Agba (finished 1994)
3. Sidi Hassine at Sidi Hassine Essejoumi (finished 1996, extra units added 1998)

The first estate has a name with a strong historical charge. A warrior in early seventh century Arabia, Khaled Ibn El Walid was originally an opponent of the prophet Mohamed. However, he went over to the prophet's side to become one of the greatest military leaders of the new Muslim forces. I was not able to find out why this name had been selected for the new estate - and as far as I know there are no other estates bearing the name of early (or other) Islamic leaders in Tunis. (There is a low income estate named after Ibn Sina, or Avicenna, the founder of mediaeval medicine, close to the southern El Morouj area).

In the case of the first two estates, planners generally referred to them by their locality rather than by their estate name. The first estate is located close to Tadhamen (lit: Solidarity), Tunis' largest self-built housing area. The second is close to Zahrouni, also a self-built area. Both estates have pockets of site-and-service developments. However, situated as they are in the western suburbs, all three are remote from El Menzah and El Manar, the north Tunis upmarket residential areas synonymous with middle-class success. These names, along with the Médina, are the key place names found in formal, written discourse. As will be seen, however, in the context of everyday life, the estate names acquire a greater semantic load - as do other names, too.

6.4 'From *houma* to *hayy*' - naming place, naming people and social mix

I called round to the Douar Hicher Estate one bright and blustery spring afternoon. It was visit when I met a particularly large number of people, and in one particular street, a small crowd of women gathered, not exactly vying with each other to make their voices heard, but all keen to tell a tale - of woe, in most cases. The extent to which the tales were gossip is debatable - and doubtless the women all knew each others lives inside out, to judge by the ease with which they moved from one house to another, barely stopping to knock on the door. And no doubt a dramatised tale builds up a person's interest value in the *hayy*. As my individual discussions progressed with various people, splinter gossip groups formed in the street, and the emotional level seemed to rise. Accumulated feeling was being released. One youngish man, who had been driving round on his mobylette, drew up: 'You know, in my view, they want to put the country people in the city and the city people (*awled el-bled*) in the country. If they knew what it was like they wouldn't have thrown us out here.' And someone else chimed in, an elderly woman: 'If they housing officer knew what it was like, she wouldn't leave us like this.'

The conversation had reached a peak. Frustration had been expressed, and I had a sense been responsible for focusing it. A foreign face, with time to listen - they had decided that I was a *murshid*, an inspector - I was there to listen, perhaps an unusual occurrence. Then the group drifts apart, people with things to do as kids emerge from the kuttab, come back from school. But I was left with the impression of a strong sense of grievance, of an 'estate identity'. Intangible though this is, it frequently emerged as a theme in discussions with residents and planners.

One particularly urbane, articulate planner put her finger on it, although she was not at all directly concerned with the operation:

14 January 1997. 'The people rehoused from the Médina, they were outsiders (*des exclus*) in a certain fashion - and they remain outsiders, even in the new quarter, a population apart... it seems that there are a lot of alcoholics...

This senior planner was unable to elaborate further, referring me to the people working directly on the project. But in a wider planning community and the local bureaucracy, an awareness of a problem population had taken root. some planner set

the new estates in a wider context, in what they saw as 'a two speed city' (*une ville à deux vitesses*) with segregation 'between an eastern half with more and more infrastructure and a western half where there isn't any.' In this context, a range of terms circulate among the haves, the intellectual groups, to describe the Other. The oukala population is rehoused in the peripheral areas, the self-built housing zones inhabited by the *zéro-huit* (08), so named after the telephone area code of their original 'backward' rural areas. Whatever the appellation, said one planner, 'the poor are always perceived as invaders.'

In the milieu of the planning professionals, the oukala inhabitants emerge as strongly stigmatised, a 'them' to be dealt with. Many of those I interviewed had anecdotes about the oukala people and their ruses; I would go to see someone with the aim of getting precise information about an aspect of policy implementation - and emerge an hour or so later with my ideas on the particular stages of (say) expropriation unclear - but most definitely wiser for a story or three about the oukala project:

12 January 1997. (A discussion about the three housing areas with a junior municipal planning officer). D.G. asks me how I found the estate at Douar Hicher - 'It's a long way off, not easy to find.' 'Not like El Agba,' I said 'which is on the main road - it has a certain appeal.' 'It's almost as if they did it on purpose, at Douar Hicher, they took people from all over the Médina, people with problems, and put them there.' There follows a story of how a colleague at the Municipality, responsible for collecting rents at Douar Hicher, drew up a list for the *Haras* (the National Guard), giving information on the underworld activities of each of the new rehoused residents; the list of names was marked up with something like one star next to a name for a pickpocket, two stars for a wine seller, three stars for a drug addict, etc. 'But they are happy among themselves, they trade with each other.' Another way of talking about the estate residents in this conversation was 'they are people apart - the phrase recurred several times, reiterated by one of the architects present.

The status of the oukala people as *des gens à part* thus links in to a semi-folklorised representation of the rehousee group as containing a strong criminal element - a theme which will be taken up below in more detail in section 6.6.

For whatever reasons, both the Douar Hicher and El Agba Estates acquired unfortunate reputations among the professional planning community. This stigma is reflected in the ways of referring to the estate and its people circulating in everyday discussion. 'All off, the oukala station' says the bus driver when the number 79 draws up at the Cité El Mechtel. When I was looking for the Cité Khaled Ibn Walid, one lad said to me, 'Oh you mean *Hayy El-Akrad*, the Kurds' Estate... they call it that because they brought people from all over, like different nationalities, and put them together there... it was the time when there were the Kurds and things in Irak.' In the course of my interviewing, I was to get many other 'folk' explanations for the name: 'because of the market, they sell all sorts of things, come from all over', or 'because they're like wild people'. Another informant assured me that Hayy El-Akrad was a SPOLS site and services development in Tadhamen. The most elaborate story which I heard from several independent sources took the Tunisian dialect meaning of *kard* ('a lump of rock used as a missile') as the basis for an explanation by which the people of the estate were reputed for throwing rocks at passing cars. The story is probably apocryphal, yet what is important is that such a vivid negative representation figure so strongly in the popular imagination.

People I chatted to in the immediate neighbourhood of the Douar Hicher Estate would almost inevitably come up with some negative reference. In all cases, the estate was easily identified as *diyar el-hakim* - 'government houses'. People from both outside and inside the project were concerned about the mixture of people therein:

3 December 1996 (conversation with a girl in her late teens at Cité El Mechtel.) L. turns out to be bright and informative. She left school because of 'circumstances', and is supposed to be at work in a neighbouring garment factory (answer to my question as to how it is that she's out like this). She's not from the rehousing area. What are the people like here, I ask. "'*Abad lutf* - Terrible people - They brought them from all over). Then she says they are "*nas mujrima*" (lit. criminal people). I wasn't sure I'd heard correctly, so I asked what

that meant, to which she replies 'they fight each other with knives'. She also tells me that her family doesn't have much to do with people in the rehousing estate ("*ma nakhlutou-humsh*")

Looking back over my field notes, I had a strong indication of a similar kind on one of my earliest visits to Douar Hicher:

13 December 1996 (conversation with a couple of women outside their house, one of the best finished on the estate, complete with green roof terrace awning). Said orange housecoat, 'They mixed the good people in with the bad.' Did this mean people had no choice with regard to their new neighbours? How were homes allotted? Need to quiz H. on this.

At one point a lad broke in to the conversation, adding to one of the women's comments about the estate 'Even its name isn't good.' I pressed him on what he meant by this. 'It's always mentioned.' I looked blank. 'In the newspapers, when there's a crime or a theft or something.' And he repeated something the woman had said about the mix of people.

Of the three estates, Sidi Hassine would seem for the moment to have the best reputation:

4 February 1997 (conversation with a healthworker). Douar Hicher - they call it Hayy El-Akrad, the Boudria area... Douar Hicher is *khamja* (rotten), El Agba is rotten... this is the best one... but for the moment people are quiet - it's Ramadhan, we'll see after Ramadhan. In any case, the air's better here than at El Agba.

Within the estates, there are quite clearly hierarchies of poverty and prestige, in part designated through a vocabulary establishing subtle categories of deprivation. The

rehousing programme may have been undertaken as part of national solidarity with the 'weak of state', but among the rehousees, as some extended their homes while others continued to eek out their lives, distinctions are readily definable. The divisions and snobisms can be glimpsed in conversation. Said on woman at El Agba, standing in front of her home, 'They built on over there... they call the rest of us *nas kellala*.' What does that mean? '*Kima des chômeurs*, like unemployed people.' But I had a feeling that *chômeur*, the French for 'unemployed', was a more censorious term when used like this in Tunisian dialect.

The expression *nas kellala*, 'people of little means' is just one of a range of dialect expressions to refer to deprivation. People would avoid the term *fkar*, 'poverty', using the word *miziria* instead. A poor but respectable person may be referred to as *insan zawali*. The term *insan dafi* carries a similar meaning, but with undertones of simple mindedness. There is the term '*akil*', which can carry connotations of well-behaved, rather like the French *sage*. The people of the oukala estates might be referred to by other suburban inhabitants as '*abad zwawla*, 'poor but honest' or even *nas mezemerin*, 'people on their uppers'.

However, there did appear another, more divisive view from within the estate. People who considered themselves respectable often mentioned how they or family members did not mix with others whome they considered in some way inferior:

5 February 1997 (discussion with a new arrival at Sidi Hassine on the doorstep of his house). 'On this street, as far as that guy sitting on the chair (about seven houses down the street), it's OK... but over there, the rest... *nas gurra* (loutish people), *nuzouh*, (rural exodus). I work nights. I come in from work, sleep in the morning. I don't mix with the people. There's one or two who are all right. Look at them - what are you going to do with people like that?' (pointing to some people I can't really distinguish, but whom I see later on, sitting on the pavement and who look poor and hopeless.) 'The people here are from the oukalas', I say in a questioning tone. Replies my informant: 'They say they're from the oukalas, but in fact most of them are from *balasat* (city centre flats)... and from

Duboisville (area next to Jbel Jeloud, chiefly famed for its cement works).

Similar view were frequently expressed. People regretted the neighbourhoods they had left behind, areas of the city with prestige and a history. Relocated in the Tadhamen area, former city centre inhabitants today find themselves on a stigmatised estate in one of the least desirable areas of the capital. The contrast with the city centre must have been a rude one for the first phase rehousees:

27 November 1996... Douar Hicher / Tadhamen is striking for its sheer extent - and for the mix of finished and unfinished building, some prosperous, some very poor. The pavements are not made up, so everybody walks in the street - motor traffic must move very slowly. People on the whole look well. There is not the sheer grinding poverty one meets in Morocco and Egypt - I saw no-one in rags. In housing terms, everyone seems to be able to build in concrete and brick

13 December 1996. You have to drive extremely slowly through most streets of Douar Hicher / Tadhamen - pedestrians everywhere. Sometimes you meet a green Garde Nationale car or landrover moving slowly along. I haven't seen any normal city police so far, only khaki uniformed *haras*, the Garde Nationale, who man the crossroads in rural areas. Other point. Official blue and white street name plaques are in Arabic only. (Is this because the area comes under the Ariana governorate, reputed more conservative?)

On a later occasion, when I was driving round Tadhamen with a guy from the area, I commented on how difficult it was to find one's way around, and received the following remark: 'You've heard of the 26-26 (the National Solidarity Fund, always referred to as the vingt-six vingt-six, the French numerals of the fund's post office account). Well here it's the capital of 26-26.' I wondered whether this was a standing joke about the area.

The planning professionals are of course aware of the 'rurban' status of the western suburbs. Their terms *quartier spontané*, *lotissement clandestin* ('clandestine housing land'), *habitat anarchique* / *hayy fawdhawi* and *gourbiville* ('hut village') appear extensively used in professional discourse in the 1970s to designate the phenomenon of the expanding self-built housing areas. Considered as a scourge (*un fléau*), the phenomenon can be found referred to as 'a source of insalubrity' in reports of the 1990s¹⁴. But beyond the designation of the built fabric as anarchic lies an unwritten set of images of the Tadhmen / peripheral populations: they are newcomers, outsiders. A 1981 report on the area puts it elegantly:

Can one affirm that this is an urban population? It seems more realistic to us to view the population as being composed of long-established migrants.¹⁵

The sub-text then is that this is an area apart. In informal discussions a range of stereotypes emerge to people the western self-built areas of Tunis. They are people of *zéro-huit* origins, *gabbi-gabbi*, so called because of their pronunciation of the hard 'g' sound instead of the urbane 'qaf' of the long established city dwellers. And as the oukala population is not held to be Tunisois (*ma hum-sh twansa*), the removal of these multioccupancy families to the periphery becomes justifiable. As one planner put it, referring to the Hafsia urban regeneration initiative in the Médina in the 1980s:

12 December 1996. 'Conservation had its limits, conserving the population had even tighter limits. Far more resources would have been necessary, and very strong motivation. However, the Médina wasn't seen as going to keep its then social level, it was nobody's aim to keep the poorest families in situ. There was a reflex which was important which went "the city centre isn't to be made into a social ghetto, it is necessary to reintroduce the middle classes, a Médina inhabited by the poor could only be a Médina which would continue to decay." This was a unanimous vision.'

¹⁴ Ministère de l'Environnement et de l'Habitat (1995) *Etude sur la réhabilitation de l'habitat insalubre et vétuste en Tunisie rapport de la 3ème phase* Tunis: MEH, Direction générale de l'habitat - Groupement Uram / STECOT, p.71

¹⁵ Ministère de l'Habitat (1981) *3ème Projet urbain : Restructuration Ettadhamen Douar Hicher, rapport d'avant projet sommaire* Tunis: Ministère de l'Habitat, UCP avec le District de Tunis, Sotuetec et l'Agence Tarek Ben Miled

Inequality in the face of the logic of the market was thus felt to be an inevitable state of affairs, preparing the way for new domestic landscapes - pastiche Médina housing for a more prosperous incoming population, basic social housing units for the city centre poor. It was 'natural' to rehouse the latter on the city edge, in already existing low-income areas - like with like. A showcase for municipal housing policy, the oukala estates emerge in everyday language with the labels of a double exclusion: from the city centre (the unwanted poor removed), and in the host area (*awled el-bled*, 'the sons of the city' in a quarter peopled by migrants of rural origin.)

Planning professionals interviewed often showed themselves to be aware of the stigma associated with life in the oukala estates:

30 November 1996 (interview with an architect) I also attempted to tackle the question of concentrating too many (several hundred) presumably very poor families in a rehousing estate. G.C mentioned that there had been problems of integration at Douar Hicher ("On les montre du doigt" - "they get pointed out"). At El Agba, the informant felt that the problem had not been nearly as acute. At the first estate this would seem to have been because there was already an existing community - but at this point either G.C.'s way of expressing the question in French - or my inability to read some subtlety - meant we didn't go any further on this particular question.

The oukala people, *jama'at el-oukayil*, were nevertheless felt to be difficult by housing officers and architects. 'Insolent' said one planner; 'you have to very firm with them - and they respect you for that', said another. One particular woman officer was universally felt to do an effective job because she was qabih, i.e. as badmouthed as the oukala people, and gave as good as she got.

Another characteristic of the oukala people in the eyes of the planners was their perceived dependence on handouts and their discontent. 'Ce sont les éternels mécontents' - 'They're forever complaining', I was told. 'They've been made used to complaining', said a housing officer. The discontent was something I noted in many discussions -unhappiness with neighbourhood, housing, and access to facilities.

Obviously there are 'decent' tenants on the oukala estates. However, in the case of the Cité Khaled Ibn Walid, the reputation of the estate as a 'problem place' has clearly stuck. The labelling - 'the Oukala Estate', 'the Kurds' Estate' - marks the area apart. In informal discussions, the problems of the estates were recognised: as the Oukala Project was implemented, a hierarchy of estates took shape in the minds of the people concerned with the project, with the Cité Khaled Ibn Walid being perceived as the first, emergency rehousing area, and the problems being ironed out at the Cité El Mechtel; the best of the three estates was felt to be the most recent one at Sidi Hassine Es-Sejoumi.

In practical terms, the stigmatisation of the Khaled Ibn Walid Estate raises potential problems of tenant turnover and access to services and jobs. Although Tunisians in general are very attached to their home areas and move unwillingly from their *houma*, many residents expressed a desire to move elsewhere if it were possible. One or two seemed to indicate that the stigma of living in the Cité Khaled Ibn Walid prejudiced their chances of getting a job. The importance of labelling is obviously a moot point - and despite the negative labelling, the estates have given a certain number of families the chance to escape the 'oukala' label.

Clearly the images of a discontented, stigmatised population are only part of the story. On visits to the estates I noted that a few owners had extended their homes, personalising them away from the undifferentiated starter units. There was an active capacity at work here, transforming the meagre built offering of the professionally designed - and socially stigmatised - streetscape. By building on to the 'starter core' of the homes created by the State, a few have created good domestic environments. So from the different ways of labelling deprivation and a poor group, the next section moves to the rehousees often highly successful methods of improving their homes.

6.5 'Like slices of melon': new building, technical process and active capacity

27 November 1996 (from notes on a drive around Douar Hicher) A mix of building types characterises the whole area. There are rather smart one storey homes with honey coloured Dar Chaâbane stonework window frames or columns; there are very rudimentary buildings, and in terms of shops, there seems to be the same range of foodstuffs and goods as in the more central areas of the city. There

are also a few low-rise buildings, patches of what would be called local authority housing in the UK (here SNIT, National Housing Company homes) with finished access roads. What there isn't for most of the housing, is finished road infrastructure and street lighting. It rained yesterday, and pools of water cover the earth roads... little rivulets of dirty black water run down the middle of a concreted narrow street.

The oukala estate at Douar Hicher was easy to spot, once I found the way, by its finished tarmacked roads. (I see from my notes that this was the distinguishing characteristic people most often referred to when they gave me directions to get there); it was also clearly different in appearance, with the low, white cubes of its houses. But views were far from unanimous about the apparently ideal homes:

14 May 1997 (from a doorstep discussion with a vociferous elderly woman) '... a curse on the contractor who put up these houses... like pieces of melon, slice after slice'

Residents on the Douar Hicher estate in particular voiced complaints about the design and construction of their homes:

13 December 1996 (from a visit to Douar Hicher on a bright, blustery morning) ... stopped to chat with a couple of women just in front of one of the more spectacular first floor extensions (with elaborate green awning on roof terrace). The main complaint of both these women was that the houses had no *viranda*, by which I understood a small enclosed area in front of the house; the women didn't like the way a passer-by could see directly into the kitchen. 'In El Agba all the houses have a *viranda*', said one woman - which surprised me - perhaps she had contact with a former neighbour in the area. All the front doors were open to (presumably) air the houses, and stripey canvas sha'ar curtains blew in the doorways - to stop one from being able to see in... 'I don't know why they made such wide roads', said the

woman with the orange fluffy housecoat. On the sunny side of the street, people had put their mattresses / bedding out to air in the sun.

There were complaints about various other features, although the issue of the doors opening directly onto the street was mentioned by many people I talked to; In the oukala, people's daily routines could be kept private within the confines of the courtyard; on the Douar Hicher estate, all the other households on the street would know what sort of bedding you had, an indiscrete passer-by could see your cooking. Some woman, at El Agba, disliked the way the kitchen opened directly onto the living room because of the smells. Two small boys griped about the noise: 'The houses are small, and you can hear the noise next door, it' because all the houses are joined together, what do you expect, just a brick between you and the next house.' The noise was also a problem for a dumb woman living with eight children in a ground floor home on the Douar Hicher estate. Her daughter had paid for partial roofing of the back courtyard to turn it into a kitchen. The problem, however, was the noise from the occupants in the flat above. (This being a corner unit, upstairs was already built on.) Other occupants complained of ceiling cracks and (at Douar Hicher) of damp:

27 January 1997 (from a discussion with two elderly women sitting on their doorstep)... (The widow) is from the rue Zarkoun area - used to rent from Abdelaziz Lasram - and was moved out. She obviously has a good sense of humour (if I could only understand half of what she says). Her ground-floor home needs work on it, there are small cracks since people built above. She's had a metal door put on doubling the original wooden one, and now feels more secure. Both women underline how small the rooms are ('one room you put the bedroom suite in it, it's full and the other, you put a suite in it, and it's full, but it's all right if you build a couple of rooms upstairs.'

On a number of occasions, I raised the issue of the design faults with the planners. The responses were always similar, based on the argument 'they can build on'. It was felt that it would have been too expensive to provide larger sites. The serviced plot / house shell option, given the urgency with which people had to be rehoused, was not considered viable. At Douar Hicher, three separate contractors had worked on the project which had produced uneven standards in the construction. Post-Douar Hicher,

a number of details had been altered: all houses had their *viranda*, with metal door. Plot sizes were increased to 80 m², which in the event of building on, produces a very respectably sized family house.

But when I had realised the level of poverty of most the ex-oukala families - and been told that a large number of households were headed by single women, I wondered how far extensions had actually been going up. At Dar Lasram, there were no readily available figures on the number of starts and completions - although extension plans were given free of charge. I was told that 'quite a lot' of tenants had been along to get extension plans - essential for planning permission. Spot counts on the two fully completed estates revealed only a small number of fully finished and occupied first floors:

10 December 1996. At Cité Khaled Ibn Walid I walked around taking photos. There were not as many first floor extensions as I had imagined (one or two really grand ones), but a lot of attempt to appropriate the space on the wide pavements in front of the tiny houses (small trees, vines, a sort of fence made out of an old metal bedstead, a sketchy garden behind a fence with concrete post decorated with sea-shells, etc).

27 January 1997. ... (At Cité Khaled Ibn Walid). ... counting the completed first floor extensions. There are quite a few starts, and one street has a lot of cantilevered concrete balconies (four or five for a street of twenty units each side), obviously by the same builder. As far as I can make out, there are only 24 completed extensions, which on an estate (occupied as of 1992) meant to rehouse 358 families, isn't very much. One or two of the extensions are pretty elaborate.

29 January 1997. (At Cité El Mechtel). There are some rather spectacular one storey homes with lots of *karmoud* green shiny tiles. Someone has added elaborate wrought iron window guards, painted Sidi Bou Saïd blue. But my impression is that the vast majority of people have not built on - which I confirm later on by counting all the

completed extensions (there are 18 in total, possibly one or two more), and various degrees of extension underway. In one case it's clear that the owners have built over the ground floor back patio (or *manshar* - drying area, as it's called), and have a large room with no aeration. There are quite a few extensions unfinished, at various stages, but no more than twenty, I estimate - which makes a total of say 40 completions and starts for an estate of 402 dwelling units.

A small minority were thus investing energy and money in their homes on the rehousee estates, producing, in the case of the second estate, dwellings styled to reflect the residents' sense of 'home'. The transformed homes were very often a variance with the architects' plans - but perhaps this was only to be expected given the prevalence of self-build strategies in Tunis. Interviews revealed an often critical regard towards the original design of house and site:

29 January 1997. (Cité El Mechtel ... from a discussion with a very articulate and forthright guy, on the southern end of the estate, who has had the nous to open a shop in his house.) The bread is arriving in a metal barrow, and there are two or three people queuing, including a woman in a rather splendid red *melaya* wrap held in place with a large solid silver pin - very traditional rural style. He looks at me taking photos, and comes over. I ask him about the building, and he's very critical. 'I told them that if the new houses were like the ones in Douar Hicher, I didn't want one. They gave us plans for the extensions, but they aren't any good. I've built the ground floor room, and then we opened the shop.' (it looks like his mother who's serving). 'The problem is all the houses open inwards, the air should come from outside.' So why did the architects do that? 'For aesthetic reasons. They put a *manshar* (courtyard) inside... so you can't see the washing. See over there (points to blankets hanging over an outside courtyard wall). I'm not going to use their plans when I build. Look, if you build according to

their plans, you wind up with a room on the terrace which faces your neighbour on the back's terrace room. What to you do? If you build a wall between the two, then it's like a chicken coop (*ki-bit djaj, hashek*). The air should come from the outside.'

Other energetic home owners were enthusiastic as they told me (sometimes at great length) of their plans for their extensions. Seeing my interest in the problems posed by building on the new estates, they would spend considerable time explaining things to me. The extension programme was worked out in full detail, costed with sources of funding and how the family was to be housed during works:

4 February 1997 (from a visit to Sidi Hassine). S.K. invites me in and makes me coffee when his daughters come back from the shop. The house is well furnished, little souvenirs from France on the wall, some solid wooden furniture. He tells me all about his plans to extend his home. He's obviously energetic, and has got it all worked out. He's not going to use the official plans to extend the house. Rather, he's going to extend the kitchen right back, and put stairs on the side of the back bedroom, as part of the space where the third ground floor room should be. "The kitchen's going to be like a European one, with a counter". And to finance this construction operation? "I've got a loan - 2,000 Dt - from work, from the Bank... the building materials aren't expensive. I'm not going to pay much for that... I know someone who can get them. The builder costs 15 Dt a day. I reckon I can put 300 Dt of the loan in my pocket. In ten days I can have it finished... during the school break in April. I've got someone the girls can go and stay with in Manouba." R.J. studies the ground, imagining the extension. The house, only two rooms and a kitchen, is small for them. In the second room, the third mattress of one of the children is still on the floor. The smaller daughter plays happily with a diminutive plastic frying pan and a bucket and water, 'cooking' something.

Considerable thought and ingenuity was displayed by the 'DIY-builders'. At El Mechtel, I was shown a spacious home by a proud owner. The family was living on the first floor, which had been tiled, although the walls were still bare cement:

20 May 1997 Early evening. walking back towards the first playground at Cité El Mechtel. Pass by a couple of solid looking first floor extensions.

From the balcony of one, a whole series of children look down, arrange in chronological order. Father is with them. 'That's a good building you have there', I shout up. 'Come and have a look then', comes the reply. Explain my interest in the extensions, and am treated to a guided tour. M., a qualified technician with a food-processing company, displays none of the negativity / fatality of so many of the other residents. His house is his big project - it feels almost like a fortress for his family - wife and four daughters, one son. He hasn't followed the official extension plans, but the result is a spacious (if unfinished dwelling). Hours spent supervising the builders, 'I've put 12,000 dinars into this, as much as the price of the house, got a loan from the company.' There is loo and shower off the small downstairs patio, bathroom (very) unfinished upstairs. The son, aged about ten, has a room to himself with a small balcony looking out over the back court; the girls share. The top level is a splendid terrace with a view over the neighbouring fields and housing to Djebel Bourkornine.

The capacity to tackle major building works like this is one which many Tunisian families seem to share. An American friend with a degree in design, working as a Peace Corps volunteer in a north-western village had the brief to build an ideal economy home on a standard AFH (the government housing land agency) plot; he recounted how humbled he was by people's capacity to build - all the kids in Nefza knew how to mix cement and put up a wall far better than he did. Many people I spoke to in the western suburbs seemed well informed on the prices of building materials, land and indeed the whole 'clandestine' development process.

27 November 1996. (notes from Douar Hicher and Hayy Boushkara). Apparently, to get *zégout* (sewer lines) put in, the residents have to get together and complain, and then in general, action is taken. L. was also a good source of bits of information on land prices and

construction. In the newest areas, the m² is sold at between 20 Dt and 27 Dt. Land closer to the better established areas goes at 35 Dt. (He pointed out a compound house with trees where one of his family had bought the land at 5 Dt the square metre, and had enough garden to raise *bagar swissri*, swiss cows). In response to my remarks about everyone knowing how to mix concrete, he seemed to say that only a few people really knew how to build. It seemed that for a couple of thousand dinars, a family could get their hands on 100 m².

On the issue of land acquisition, L. used the term *numero* (pl. *nawamir*) for land title. Sometimes people would find that they had acquired a land title which had already been sold - and then there would be a dispute. (About which more another time, I hope). The *baladiya* (municipality) only comes round three days a week, so people aim to get their floor up quickly and then the authorities are forced to recognise the building. L. pointed out that people decorated the outsides of their homes in different ways.

At Sidi Hassine, despite the estate being brand new when I visited in early 1997, a number of organised individuals were already well on the way to getting their extensions up. But would the majority of Sidi Hassine residents be able to create the homes they desired. On the basis of the small number of completed extensions at Douar Hicher and El Agba, the process would appear to be a slow one, and far more problematic than the planners had foreseen. In the housing areas surrounding the estates, however, communities appeared to be creating relatively well-constructed environments, satisfying shelter and social needs. The process of putting together these environments was common knowledge (why should it be otherwise?) as I found in discussions with Douar Hicher residents:

28 November 1997 (from a chat in a café at Douar Hicher). ... talked about land and building prices. In the more built up areas of Tadhamen, land prices were over 50 dinars / m². Building materials were cheap in the opinion of

this informant - what really was expensive was the cost of skilled labour. A good builder cost up to 20 dinars a day, plus two labourers at 8 dinars each, and the cost quickly goes up - you have to feed them, etc.

The homes on the rehousing estates were of course delivered ready for habitation to the tenant-buyers. On the monotype dwelling base, the occupants were in their various ways creating more personalised aesthetic environments. Time, finance, and site constraints meant the original architects had been unable to work on questions of individuality. One architect felt that the new estates represented little *avance* on the Ecochard *trame* 8x8 houses of the 1950s; the option of providing differently sized units according to family size did not appear to have been considered ('Everyone had to be treated alike', was the standard response to my open-ended questioning on this issue). Sensitive design - although the ASM (the project manager) had experience of urban renewal schemes in the Hafsia area of central Tunis - took a backseat. There was no symbolic use of typical features on the oukala estates: cost constraints were all.

The low-rise, low density streetscape of the new estates is a very identifiable environment. The rehousee community also carries a stigma - as seen in the preceding section - doubtless enhanced by the standard building units. Only a few families were able to rise to the challenge of extending their homes on the 1992 estate. The challenge for the project designers, on the other hand, was clearly how to make low-cost building activity possible. Another logic had been at work, however. Said one planner, when asked about the rehousing on the peripheral estates: 'Why not? They become owner-occupiers out there, there's a very real economic logic.' A much more complex set of considerations is at work however as people work out their lives on the city edge. The next section explores some of the practicalities of living on the new estates.

6.6 *El abd yeshkur* - 'you're thankful': then and now, daily lives and practicalities on the new estates

During Ramadhan in 1996 and 1997, Tunisian national television ran a nightly drama series *Khuttab 'al-bab* ('The suitors at the door'), set in the Médina of Tunis. Starring highly regarded local actors Mona Noureddine and Raouf Ben Ammar in the roles of an ageing Tunisois couple living in a fine patrician town home in the rue du Pacha district, the mini-soap was an overnight success - and was even sold on to Arab satellite television, a rarity in a market dominated by Egyptian soaps and eternal Latin American series dubbed into classical Arabic.

But the success of the series was perhaps due to more than its reworking of traditional soap themes in a Tunisian context. The series is shot through with a myth, that of the ideal Tunisois family - not without its troubles, it is true, but rooted in a traditional setting. *Khuttab 'al-bab* depicts life in a polite Médina, where the patriarch returns home to find the delicate smell of *muloukhiyya* pervading the ancestral home, where the carpenters rear songbirds and listen to Ali Riahi and the main characters speak the nicest Tunisois dialect. Said one friend, a resident of the rue Sidi Ben Arous, close to the rue du Pacha, 'The series has done more to promote the Médina than anything for years.'

The residents of the new oukala estates came mainly from a Médina of densely packed houses beset with problems of rising damp, burst piping, and leprous walls and ceilings. No idea of their communities, imagined or otherwise, intruded into the serendipity of the post-prandial Ramadhan soap. From chatting with residents on the new estates, I was able to get a faint sense of the practical problems of living there, of the contrast with past times in the decaying dwellings of the city centre. So the present section is about a past, sometimes idealised, in the Médina, and coping with a present in neighbourhoods far from friends and contacts.

3 December 1996 (from a discussion with a groups of kids at El Agba) J. is the goalee out of the group (has an oversized torn pink ski glove). Aged 12, he proves to be a lively spark, and from out of the joking with his friends I manage to pick out some snippets of information. J. tells me that he used to live on the rue Zarkoun (area of dilapidated late nineteenth century housing), in a house 'that an

Italian lady gave to us'. He also tells me that their new house was going to be a present from the 26-26 (National Solidarity Fund), and then "they made it 11,000 Dt". He also knows that in the city they only paid the electricity bill, while here they have to pay electricity and water. He also points out an area which 'they were going to build a market on' (uses the word *marché* rather than *souk*), that they brought lots of big stones and then took them away. There's a feeling that promises are being made but not kept here...but J. was really more interested in the trucks that brought the stones.

The official view - as portrayed in the Tunisian press - was that life in the new settlements could only be better. But statistics and interviews revealed a much more nuanced picture - of low repayment levels and some prosperous families, of overcrowding and pride in ownership, of an environment with play areas and open air - but tainted by a fading optimism and 'toujours les problèmes'.

Oukala residents had been used to life at the heart of the city, with all that this supposed in terms of locational advantages. Certainly there had been appalling problems of unsafe housing and overcrowding - but then rents and bills had been low - or non-existent in certain cases where the Municipality or absentee landlords had just stopped bothering to collect their due. And then there was the advantage of being close to work.

A social worker sketched out the variety of job options open to poorly skilled adults: for the men, there is portering, selling from barrows in the street or a job, probably through a friend or a relative, in a workshop or store; for the women, there were just as many options - working in a garment sweatshop or as a cleaner, perhaps in an office or (better) in a private home, with lunch provided and perhaps the possibility to take food home in the evening. And of course, there was the biggest advantage of all: no time or cost expended on public transport. In terms of the practicalities of daily existence, the Médina won hands down on every account:

4 February 1997 (from a conversation at Sidi Hassine) ... as I walk past, a guy calls out to a

friend, standing outside, his home with his daughter, 'Here's one of the new neighbours.' So we strike up a conversatino. The guy turns out to be articulate, willing to talk, challenging. He won't answer directly, is somehow suspicious... I tell him I'm an *urbaniste*, try ot explain my interest in the rehousing. 'So is it good living here?' I ask. 'You're the *muhandis* (engineer), you tell me', he comes back. 'well you have the air out here, the air's clean' I say, and then well, the houses are sound... but there's the distance, and maybe there's no work here. 'That's it. It's a long way. Before you put people in a place, you think about their living... they guy with his daughter there, she goes to study in Tunis everyday, that costs a dinar on the bus; when you're in the city centre, there's work here, there's work there. Here it's three kilometres that way, ten kilometres the other - you have to go a long way for work. It's not encouraging. And then you come home in the evening and there are things lacking, and your wife complains, it gets to you, you just give up.'

A similar, although more general view was given by a social worker:

20 May 1997. 'I wouldn't have put them there... problems between neighbours. And it's a long way. There are people who have to get up at 5 am. The problem of transport - everything is difficult, they have to find *flous errukoub*, money for the bus. There are a lot who didn't move their children from the city centre schools. The lycée, the market, the clinic, the bus, they should have thought about that before they moved them.

Although not borne out by any statistics, fragments like the above are indicators of the general feeling about the project. The more able, nevertheless, are able to juggle their lives to fit the new situation:

5 February 1997. (from a discussion at Sidi Hassine)
 T.L. works with mentally handicapped people in M., his wife in the same area with old people. He got a house in Sidi Hassine by signing up in his mother's name. He and his wife used to rent in one of the inner western suburbs, 120 dinars a month. Then they lived in the city centre with mother in a crumbling apartment, to show overcrowding and the need to be rehoused. Here they pay only 34 dinars a month, and the house is their property, 'which is always better.' So with something like 45 dinars a month in travelling expenses, they find themselves 75 dinars better off a month. 'and you can do something with that money'. The problem is transport - and he goes into detail on his arrangements on this.

The practical problems were also related to health and shopping. A health care worker told me that the ex-oukala women tended to avoid the local clinics, preferring to maintain contacts in the city. The other big practical issue, alongside transport, was shopping provision. Tunisian families consume large quantities of fresh produced; heavy to carry from a distant market. Residents at Douar Hicher were going by bus to the Bardo to shop, there being no direct bus to Tadhamen. At El Agba, produced was bought from the Zahrouni market ('When I come back from the market, I have to put my feet up'). The suburbs were felt to be more expensive. Remarking to a woman originally from an oukala at Bab Menara that the market at Bab El Fella was excellent and very cheap, she remarked to her neighbour 'Yes, even *he* knows.'

The locational disadvantages, notably with regard to work, may have been exaggerated by the oukala rehousees. Along the main Oued Ellil road, five minutes walk from the Douar Hicher estate, are numerous factories, workshops and trades of all kinds. Sidi Hassine, although basically a green field site, is still only a few minutes bus ride from a strip of workshops and the big Chakira cable factory; one of Tunisia's most successful exporter companies. In the neighbourhood of all three areas, there is a lot of house building going on.

The problem may be, however, that in a highly competitive labour market (unemployment is officially estimated to be running at 15 %), the low-skilled adults

of the rehousing estates may find gaining access to jobs difficult - especially as much activity is based in family-orientated firms. As the graphs in Appendix 4 show, the vast majority of adult male heads of household are listed as 'labourers' and 'workers' - no doubt the categories featuring on their national identity cards. A large proportion of adult women heads of household were listed as *inactive* - a strange term for women with responsibilities towards children. Another large section of the male heads of household were listed as *inactif* in the municipal data charts. At one point social worker provided me with a thumbnail sketch of the situation of many families:

20 May 1997. '(on the estates) there are more and more lone women heads of household, like in society... the women and girls work more, the girls working in factories, the women doing washing, working as cleaners, the husband you'll find he's depressed, alcoholic... we don't draw up statistics, but it should be compulsory. (The young men) eighteen to twenty years old don't look for work, they get into fights, they get up late - I don't know how they think - they want to get ahead quickly, they see how other people are living...'

The official employment categories mentioned above take the place of a more nuanced view of activity held by social workers and housing professionals.

Gradually, I realised from talking to these people that there were residents in the first estate who had a range of criminal and semi-criminal activities to make their livelihood. There were no published figures available, but independently professionals mentioned clandestine prostitution, illegal retail of cigarettes, alcohol and drugs (*harabish*), alongside more classic burglary and currency dealing.

Community (re)constructed?

The question of the household activity / income is of course a vexed one - linking in to question of the various categorisations of the oukala families discussed above in 6.3. How far did they need help, and what kind of help could be provided? 'They're not really social cases at all', declared a planner quite bluntly. Suffice to say that for many residents, the resettlement had been a mixture elation and problems:

4 December 1996. (from a discussion with a French researcher who had worked on the construction of

neighbourhood in the rue Marr area of the Médina) I.B. tells me how it was '*la grande fête*' when she went to visit, how keen the women were to show her their interiors. Her particular friend had created a very pretty interior. However, she was finding it difficult to get used to life on the edge of the city (unlike her daughter). Whereas based in Souk El Blat it had been possible to go and sell clothes on the pavement at Bab Jedid, buy food close by in the souk, this was all much more difficult. The other difference was that the woman felt a lack of community, and told the story of how an old lady on the new estate, living by herself, had died, and that people had taken three days to notice. Possibly apocryphal, the story is important as a neighbourhood myth.

29 January 1997 (visiting the El Agba estate with two architects, there to survey for a new playcentre) ... we talk to an elderly woman who comes out of one of the doors. She was originally from the Hafsia. Does she like living here? "The *dar* (house) is fine - a bit cold - but the estate was better at first (something I don't catch to the effect that things are not as good as they were). But it was better in the Hafsia, everything was near (*kullshay qarib*), friends, for shopping... I'm by myself here. People kept breaking the door (points to the battered wooden paintwork of the door) so now I just leave it open all the time".

Isolation versus sociability, the workings of community - a term much prized in British planning and political discourse - are hard to pin down. I would have needed to actually reside on one of the estates to develop a real sense of existence there. I did feel, however, that there was a big difference in the community 'feel' between Douar Hicher and El Agba. At the latter estate, the houses seemed better cared for; in the evenings, the two big recreation areas were full of children playing on the climbing frame and slides; adolescents sitting on the benches discussing. There was a certain

vie de quartier, a focus point at the Café Taoufik. At Douar Hicher, the feel was much more downbeat - but the impression was confirmed by an architect-lecturer who had had groups of students, working on site plans for social housing, look at the estate:

13 January 1997 '... I had the impression that the area was full of women with nothing to do, with no direction... no community, the men leaving early in the morning, working a long way off, the children all in school... with the amount of space (we had already discussed the issue of the oversized roads) it should have been possible to come up with some workshops, space for a couple of looms... like in Melassine, in one of the urban development schemes, where the women had a pottery. Traditionally, the women always had something, a craft activity to do.'

In my field notes, I have written that the architect 'seems to feel that there is no sense of community' in the sense of a tight network of the extended family that this person might have known as a girl, visiting relatives in the great patrician houses of the Médina. On an afternoon visit to Douar Hicher in May 1997, one of several, I had a very different impression of what 'community' might mean. The visit began with a long conversation with a woman whose daughter I had photographed on an earlier visit. I then met her neighbours, some with health problems, others with very clearly limited resources. My 'introducer', a young woman of about 25, new all her neighbours' movements, who was in, who was out, and with a friend of hers we went into the others' houses. They seemed to move in and out of each other's homes easily. We visited a blind woman, two elderly sisters, a middle aged woman with a Downe's syndrom child, partly paralysed.

The women seemed to have intimate knowledge of the misfortunes and joys of the others of the group. But in the tiny houses, a line of doors all giving onto the same street, little could be hidden - especially when frontage space has to be used as well. I would like to say that I saw a great expression of solidarity between them. Rather I left the estate that day with an impression of jealousies and the minor feud ('Don't believe her, she's always lying'; 'they gave those two old women a whole house - they could have put a family in that.') Opinions on others engendered by proximity and poverty, dispensed to the passing stranger.

Many of those who felt themselves to be a cut above the others said they didn't have much to do with others in the neighbourhood (There's one or two at this end who are all right'), or cast an amused eye on their lives:

29 January 1997 (a woman at El Agba) 'In this street it's fine, well there's her down there from the country, wanted to become like the townspeople (aouled el-bled) but like a donkey. She's a bit of a thug, hits her husband, sometimes he has to sleep outside, poor thing.

The town regretted

Sometimes distaste for the neighbourhood is mixed in with regrets for the old place:

7 January 1997. (an elderly woman at Douar Hicher) '... my son works at the Ministry of Health, he never goes out in this area, he doesn't speak to anyone, he comes home from work, eats and goes to bed ... I'm not getting married here he says ... My children grew up in Montfleury, with the Belkadhis (cites a list of other top families) ... we lived in a place belonging to Lahbib Mehiri, then his heirs wanted to sell ...

The town centre, *wust el-bled*, and its facilities were a recurrent theme in discussions. A health worker described how the women of the oukalas had a certain 'towny' way of life:

21 May 1997. 'the others in the Douar Hicher area are peasant women, they aren't as clean. The ones from the Médina are organised, clean, they keep their houses well ... and they're used to the ways of the town, entertainment, the cinema.

Many families had kept their children in city centre schools ('If your children are in a school where they're 80 % good, are you going to move them to a school where the

pupils are only 20 % good?). Although people did not regret the dangerous conditions in the oukalas, they regretted other, more intangible things:

27 January 1997. (conversation with a guy in his mid-thirties at Douar Hicher) 'We used to live in a big house, Dar Giovanni, on rue Sidi Bou Mandil ... and Italian's house, the entrance was all marble and tiles ... there were Italians and Jews and Maltese ... those were the people there were ... it's boring here, nothing to do, no work ... in the city centre there are cafés, the Café du Colisée, you have somewhere to go ...' I explain my interest in the area a bit more. 'So what are they going to do?' 'I don't know.' We look at each other, realise that the situation won't change, I suppose, and laugh.

Moving on or being content?

Although a number of people had made major investments in their homes, people were quite ready to envisage moving on. I discovered that some people had in actual fact moved out - even though under the terms of the sale-by-rent contract this was not possible. The desire to move away seemed to be motivated by dissatisfaction with the estates, as often as not:

30 January 1997 (El Agba) My last conversation in the area is with a woman in her fifties who replies to me in very correct French. I'm surprised and she tells me rather proudly that she was a till-girl at the Magasin général (major Tunis department store). The woman's house is obviously being improved, the first floor seems complete and I can see sky-blue wall tiles decorating the new stairs through the half-open door. What do you think of the neighbourhood? 'I don't really like it... there are always problems ... and even if you go into your house and shut the door, the problems come to you. My son is studying at the Faculty,' she says

proudly, 'I'm intending to sell, move on, ... I don't want to stay here.'

Others, though, the vast majority, households where the chief breadwinner was unskilled or in no formal employment, did not have such choices. The euphoria of becoming owner occupiers had given way to resignation. People were grateful for what they had (*el-abd yeshkur* - 'you give thanks'). Said one woman, 'You have somewhere to rest your head and then you hope for something better for your children.'

But given the muted unhappiness with project, *les problèmes*, how did rehousees deal with authority, the powers that had removed them from the oukalas in the first place. (The same might be asked about the project's executors). Could the unhappiness be expressed? The next section therefore looks at something of the power relations at work in the Oukala Scheme.

6.7 'We are customers of authority

As has been seen above, the people who were moved from the Médina and elsewhere as part of the Oukala Project came to be seen as difficult by both municipal employees and the existing communities. The first two estates acquired unfavourable reputations, based mainly on criminal activity of which I began to get a sense as I got to know some rehousees better. But this was just one aspect of a problematic relationship with *el hakim*, 'authority'. It also emerged that not only the allocation / displacement process had been hard to manage for housing professionals; there was a relationship to manage with the political decision makers as well. The present section therefore tries to explore the relations between the groups concerned with the project with authority, *el hakim*, the Tunisian Arabic term which can be used to cover police, government and the authorities in the wider sense of the term. Literally the term means 'the ruler', and it in speech it is preferred over *al hukouma* ('the government') to refer to the State. Of all the themes I have tried to develop, the issue of authority, of its representations, was perhaps the most multi-faceted, and hence the most difficult to tackle.

29 January 1997 (conversation with two women at El Agba) '... the first Ramadhan here, there were always problems, fights in the morning and in the

evening. Police always patrolling. You could say we were customers of the police (*clienat 'ind el-hakim*). This street's OK, but over there (waves her hand to the far side of the estate) you have *les danseuses* (laughs)... you know what that means, *les danseuses*? As I'm a bit slow on the uptake ...
'From rue Zarkoun and places ... they carry on'

The theme of female prostitution was also evoked by housing personnel. I had a vivid account from a rent collection officer who told me that of an evening there were more BMWs and Mercedes at the crossroads near Douar Hicher than in El Menzah. The same officer assured me that '30 % of households are living from prostitution'. A social worker, also with many years of experience of working with deprived families in the Médina, when I put this to her; thought that 'Si Mohamed, he exaggerates a bit there ... a lot of people they're fine. In El Menzah you have the same thing, but they don't talk about it because it's there.' A health care professional thought that the figure was high at Douar Hicher, saying:

21 May 1997 ... there are households which have no source of revenue. They have a way of life. The Omda (local representative of the governor) often talks to me about this. They hide lots of things from us. At the beginning we used to visit lots of households, there were public meetings, you can see these women, they stand out. The Omda refused to continue visiting homes - they would say things about him if a family was helped after a visit.

The phenomenon is undoubtedly present, transferred from the Médina where it has a long history in certain quarters, notably Abdallah Guèche, with official status. The extent is hard to judge - it was certainly something which my reading of planning documents and press reports had not prepared me for - an area of official silence, the domain of rumour and hearsay.

Equally difficult to judge is the issue of adult male criminality:

12 January 1997 (from a discussion with planners)
L.C. said the police had no authority over the area

(the Cité Khaled Ibn Walid) I asked him how he could be so sure of this. He replied that he had his sources. (Is this another urban myth?) ... Then an anecdote about a conversation with a police officer at Bab Souika; someone had said that it must be much easier in the Médina now that the oukala people had been moved on. 'Not at all', replied the officer, 'it's more difficult now - they come into the Médina for their business and then disappear back to Douar Hicher. Before we at least knew where to find them.'

Another anecdote follows: '... so at Douar Hicher someone heard the women making *tzaghrut* noises (ululating) like there was a wedding or a circumcision, and asked what was going on. Someone's just been let out of prison, was the answer, and there were all these people going round to the house with baskets of bottles of wine to celebrate ... you know the local municipality doesn't want to have anything to do with them.'

The shadowiest issue of all was drugs, usually referred to as *harabish* (lit. pills) and *zatla* (grass). Certain areas in the capital have a reputation as being home to a high level of drug abuse. People in my area of the Médina had stories of X or Y who had worked in Italy, selling *el ghabra* (dust), and been expelled / come back with a habit. In Tunisia, the possession of even the smallest amount of *takroui* (cannabis) carries a very heavy penalty. To my knowledge there is no drug related street crime. However, I was able to pick up on other indications of a violent side to life on the periphery:

12 May 1997: Café on the Place Barcelone. 11 pm. A warm spring night. Have been down to the avenue Bourguiba to buy Friday's Le Monde with the book supplement. A guy in a baseball cap followed me back towards the Place Barcelone. We get talking, go into the café. Smoked cream yellow walls, neon light painful on the eyes, stale Madeira cake in a

glass box on the counter. *Express allongé, capucin.* 'Do you have a light?' We chat about jobs, visas for Europe, sport. Café is hot, K. takes his jacket off. Both his forearms are marked with multiple, parallel scars. Seeing my surprised expression, he says 'I had a lot of problems'. Decide not to enquire more for the moment.

The explanation of this comes later when I mentioned the scars in a conversation with a midwife:

22 May 1997. '... scarification. They (*les jeunes*) hang out, get drunk, take tablets, dare each other, it's to show courage ... scar the torso or the arms. Especially in the summer, they hang around outside, nothing to do, drinking, some take pills - no-one dares to tell them to go home. We see some really bad cases at the hospital up in Tadhamen.

In interviewing at Douar Hicher, I gained a sense that security was an issue. 'Il n'y a pas de confiance ici, monsieur' - 'There's no trust here, sir', said an elderly woman, describing how burglars had taken first the gas bottle (an expensive and essential item), then the big tin bath used for doing the washing. The neighbours had been broken into five times over the six or seven years since rehousing. However, the housing officers were on the whole aware that there was a problem section in the population:

17 February 1997 ... (interview with a municipal official) ... you know it really was the Tunis mafia, *la pègre de Tunis*, they they rehoused at Douar Hicher.

Another planning officer described visiting one of the most crowded oukalas on the impasse des Djerbiens, close to the Hafsia renewal area, an oukala which contained a large number of criminal elements. The removal of the oukalas on this alley, and others like it on the impasse de l'Essieu in the same area is generally felt by planners to have made the quarter more secure - hence paving the way for a more comfortably off population.

Out on the new estates, however, residents were only too aware that part of the population contains criminal elements:

4 February 1997 (discussion with a resident at Sidi Hassine) '... but there's a *merkez*, a police station isn't there? 'The police station's right over there ... but what good's a police station with this lot, what good's a police officer ... you need the National Guard to make this lot go straight, that's what they had to do at El Agba, they had to bring in the National Guard.

Whether the National Guard post on the main road at El Agba was established after problems on the estate, I couldn't establish. Nevertheless, the Douar Hicher area is clearly National Guard territory, and on several occasions on visiting the estate I saw a National Guard landrover parked up on rough ground nearby.

Thus taking *el hakim* as police authority, the estate residents are faced with regular contact with the law. The mix of 'good with bad' is felt to have produced much conflict. The residents' contact with the police, is only part of a wider net of contacts maintained with authority. The term *el hakim* can also be used to designate the government (locals referred to the estates as *diyar el hakim* ('government houses')); if the relationship with the police was complex, so too were contacts with the municipal authorities.

A presidential gift?

Although many people at the Cité Khaled Ibn Walid were full of complaints about the rehousing, there had also been a huge demand for new homes. At Dar Lasram, the municipal staff appeared to be swamped by requests to get on the housing list. On a Thursday morning, the day of *jama'at el oukayil* (oukala people), the great entrance hall of the palace would be filled with the hopeful, mainly women in sefsaris, a few men, waiting to see one of the social workers or housing people. I was told that the pressure on staff was so much that a special badges were issued to applicants and the chief housing officer had taken to using the back entrance.

Despite numerous discussions, however, I could get little sense of whether there was a formal procedure available in writing for processing applications. (Many of the

applicants would be women with very poor literacy anyway). I could get not idea as the extent to which demand was satisfied; little was written down, and the only (raw) figures I was able to obtain were for the rehousee families. From observing officer / applicant contact, and from discussions with would-be rehousees, I gained an idea of how the allocation process operated. The main official criterion was the unsafeness of the dwelling, coupled with the number of unrelated families in it. (four or more). First contact with the rehousing process had in many cases been the visit of an architect or planner from the ASM or Municipality, presented purely as a technical visit. Housing personnel felt that they knew the worst cases, and were dealing with them. The specific processes of expropriation and retrocession were complex. There were no measures of density or overcrowding levels in the arrondissements of the Médina - or elsewhere for that matter, no information - beyond hearsay - on how land and property prices were being effected. Another important issue which came up was loan repayment: although there was a consensus that a large number of families were defaulting or were several months behind, there was no attempt to analyse the situation in detail.

Rehousees, however, and hopefuls too seemed to have a variety of ways of playing the system:

29 January 1997 (conversation at El Agba, two middle-aged women) One of the women, the more articulate one, is from Halfaouine, the other from Souk el Blat. The former tells me how she got her house: 'I wasn't supposed to be included in the oukalas, but I heard about the project, they didn't accept my dossier at first, but talking in all sincerity, I'm not going to lie to you, I got a letter from the mu'tamid (local government official) and a mulahadha (special note) from the local party office. Then I got the house from the Governor. In Halfaouine, I had two rooms and a couple of rooms upstairs, but in bad condition. I wasn't supposed to be included.'

Others, less confident and articulate, found the process problematic. Disappointment could be bitter, especially for a breadline family who after assembling the required papers, the downpayment (a hefty tenth of the value of the house, i.e. 1,000 dinars) are told that there are no more units available.

Those seeking a place in the rehousing programme are most definitely supplicants, and in the end it becomes a providential chance for some, part of the scarce range of resources available - and to be accessed via keen competition and tenacity.

For those who did gain new homes, additional help was available via special project support units established in the new estates. Some rehousees (some 50 in the first two estates) were found work via the Agence de l'emploi; assistance was given in the creation of micro-enterprises, with some sixty small businesses being created.

Through the Association Action Sociale, a number of jobs were created as well. The main source of funding, it would appear, was the Special Oukala Fund (Compte spécial oukalas), which is kept topped up by a levy of 36 dinars / m² on the owners of unsafe property demolished. The fund is sufficiently well fed for there to be a surplus for the social and job creation programmes. Another source of resources was the local shu'uba, the party office:

30 January 1997 (El Agba, conversation with a rather jolly rotund woman in a yellow fluffy djellaba) 'You give thanks, *Sidyedet er-raïs* (the President) and Madame H. did a good job. for the religious festivals, we get clothes for the children and food, they help us, they help us pay the rent... ' 'Where do you get the clothes and food from?' 'From the *shu'uba*'.

Thus a web of support (and dependency) of various kinds is woven between rehousees, government officials and housing personnel.

They always want more

The official institutions' capacity to assist was not always seen in a favourable light by planners and personnel, however. It was acknowledged that the subsidised housing with assistance units was by no means the end to people's problems:

19 May 1997 (a social worker) 'It's a unique project - they should consider themselves living in Paradise. But they always want more. The Tunisians are a spoilt lot. The State always helps them - but it's rare they're happy, saying look how I was before ... I've found they always complain, but the problem doesn't look as though

it's going to finish to me - a family leaves (the Médina, there's another family. There are problems more than our means - (a subsidy of) 20 dinars or 30 dinars a month - what good is that? I sometimes feel I can't do anything; they tell me things which I can't do anything about.

Another professional described things in similar terms:

21 May 1997. 'There are only five social workers for the whole of Tadhamen. In the beginning, they (oukala people) wanted a lot.' 'So how do you access, say, *shu'uba* handouts?' 'You see there are lists, the families get known, by the *'omda*, or the local party official. These lists get updated, they circulate ... but the families lack everything. Some help is channeled via the Centre for Social Defence, part of the Ministry of Social Affairs. In 1980, they launched the Needy Families Programme - a handout of 75 dinars per family per month. But the oukala families, when they were moved, they lost their place on the list, lost their payment ... the small business loans, the rent, they don't pay. These are people who've learnt to beg. You moved me from my home, they say, find me a solution.'

The underside of the web of assistance and dependence is thus a widespread realisation that the State has only a partial capacity to resolve problems. On the rehousee side, there is a feeling of favouritism in some quarters; on the official side, there is a feeling of pressure, of trying to solve the unsolvable. But the well-meaning paternalist guidance and support seemed based on limited openness, restricted availability of information - not necessarily because the information was secret, but just because no-one had thought to analyse it and make it available. Becoming 'a client of authority' necessarily meant working hard to interpret and utilise the information available in the hope of gaining more.

And in one key respect, many rehousees have been able to gain more by turning official fears back against the State. As I interviewed, I discovered that many households were no longer paying rent. The question of repayment levels one would have expected to be important from the point of view of project replicability. No

figures were publicly available, but planners and others gave figures ranging from 30 % to 55% / 60 % for regularly paying households - which was seen as being due to a door-to-door collection system. However, it emerged that at Douar Hicher there had been a consensus among a large number of residents that they were not going to pay 'because Zine gave us the houses'. How and when this feeling had arisen, I couldn't ascertain - probably from the start of the operation, but I was told that the matter had reached the Presidency's ears. 'Some people made them believe they were free houses' (conspiracy theory from a planner).

13 May 1997. (at the oukala office) '... so we had to start proceedings. Of course the social cases, - widows, old people - we don't bother them. You know that other institutions have similar problems - at Hayy esh-Shuhada, they don't pay. But we don't go through with the legal proceedings. In fact our repayment levels are better than the others. We have personal relationships with these people ... and then, even if the people don't pay, the State is on a winner because it has resolved a social problem.'

A similar view had been expressed to me by an astute rehousee at Sidi Hassine:

7 February 1997. 'People who were paying 5 dinars rent in the city centre - they're not going to pay here.' 'will they be removed if they fail to pay?' 'what do you think? They get their home taken (in the centre), and they get moved out here, far from everywhere, and then they take the house here - no, it's impossible. The government is a hundred per cent winner in the affair - the land in the city centre is worth 200 dinars a square metre.'

The repossession of homes would have created too many difficulties for the government in residential areas already perceived as difficult. 'And then it all went quiet, we heard nothing more about it', said a planning officer of the 'payment crisis' at Douar Hicher. A *modus vivendi* had been established, with neither side willing to rock the boat. Clients and authority - or rather the *hakim's* representatives, had

reached the limits of the achievable with the limited resources on offer. These achievements were very much on display, however, in certain quarters.

6.8 Another set of clients: achievements on display, policy objectified

From fieldnotes, 6 January 1997. At Dar Lasram. Opening of an exhibition, Unesco sponsored and prepared, on the City and Urban Street Furniture. The splendid cross-shaped reception room at Dar Lasram, chandelier glittering, is filled with what might be termed the Great and Good (in a UK context) - or at the very least, a lot of ambassadors. Rather feeble cardboard panels with black and white pictures of cities hang against the deep ochre, cream and black tiles. In the modern permanent exhibition room, new photos, on the latest phase of the oukala operation, have been added to the standing panels. Pairs of images, before and after, lines of immaculate white houses, one or two photos of interiors. In one photo, an olde man stares at the camera. Clothed in the countryman's deep brown kechabia cloak, he sits on a brand new carved wooden bench, the type found in all Tunisian homes. The bare white walls of the new home's interior contrast with the 'before' photo: blankets and mattresses standing against the walls of a ruined house. Officials in lounge suits and ambassadors looked at the displays and are served orange juice and canapés by waiters from the Africa Méridien.

The achievements of the rehousing initiative were widely presented in the press - as mentioned previously. A smaller but more influential public was reached at exhibitions. Maintaining the profile of the initiative with potential funding bodies was essential. Financial institutions such as the FADES, (*Fonds arabe pour le développement économique et social*) were persuaded to put money into the Médina housing upgrading programme in 1996 on the basis of urban regeneration work and rehousing already accomplished. The Tunisian poor, grateful and never castigated,

are displayed here and in other State-sponsored exhibitions - notably at the National Solidarity Fund exhibits, where focal points include photographs of archetypes such as the blindman, the widow and the orphan talking to the President and scale models of ideal rural communities. A central feature, however, at these exhibitions are video films - images of the President on visits to homes and institutions across the nation.

6.9 'Words from the city' - an interpretation

How to summarise the multiple facets of interaction between built environment professionals, politicians and people, how to account for the overlapping representations of home and group, place and city? This chapter was by no means an easy one to write, and my attempt to produced thematised writing from the numerous discussions and interviews has opened the way for comment and further interpretation. One reader emphasised the risks of selectivity, of being blind to things outside my thematic framework; another stressed the need for producing a more focused account. A third commentator suggested that the writing would have had more impact if more of the actual speakers' 'words from the city' had been included. In revising this chapter, I tried to take these comments on board. I was not, however, able to take the draft back to planners and rehousees for comment. This must be left to a further stage in the research process, possibly prior to publishing an article drawn from this chapter.

The primary aim of this chapter was to produce a broad backcloth to a particular form of policy practice and a particular discursive storyline. The objective was to allow other voices, some excluded from the official narrative, other versions, never published, to emerge. I thus bring forth a diverse set of representations of people and place, on the basis of which, I later argue (see chapter 7.1, *The suburban solution?*), it may be possible to build more creative, empirically informed and helpful forms of policy practice.

The underlying, secondary aim was to provide detailed information of a particular State practice in a 'developing' country. I was interested in working on this in the light of the debates on neopatriarchy in the Arab states. If I felt I had been successful in reading-off categories and groups - representations of various kinds - from the interviews, my information on the actual practice of policy implementation was much more fragmented. Or on reflection, I mean the extent to which the process was open to unfair practices, and the extent to which this could be tolerated.

In part, this was due to what might be termed 'the policy environment' or the 'discursive context'. There was a dearth of written material. If the press reports were uninformative, so too were the policy documents: the Oukala Project was never referred to in the broader context of housing provision or conservation planning, there was little information beyond a few broad statistics on numbers of sub-standard dwellings. I was surprised at the lack of written information on the 'social side' of the project - but as one architect put it, 'the social services people don't write much, or rather, they don't write anything down at all'. I found that certain individual professionals would launch into masses of loosely related detail on (say) expropriation, but that the wider story on landownership and property values was untouched on in anything more than broad anecdotal terms. It is impossible for a sole researcher to grasp all the intricacies of a policy process - this is a team task - but it would have been easier had there been a more reflective professional culture around urban issues. Suffice to say that the researcher working on UK housing associations or waterfront urban regeneration is overwhelmed with documentary material in comparison.

This difficulty, in terms of documentary background, and my preference for a fluid, associative style of assembling material, probably contributed to the unfocused feel of the first version of the chapter. With regard to the criticism regarding selectivity, this must be a dilemma facing anyone undertaking social research. I can only hope that I have been as fair and accurate as possible in listening to people and in sifting through their accounts. The issue of placing more of people's words in the text is trickier one. Would more direct quotation have helped to drive the argument forward? Here it was a question of striking a balance between words from the street and commentary - which leads me to add comment, in the light of writing up and analysing text, on the nature of the material and its collection.

People were on the whole very open - but then I did not have an agenda which went deep into people's private lives, although I was interested in conditions in the home, the setting of private life. I told interviewees that I was undertaking a research degree. Professional people understood, rehousees, already with experience of being interviewed for the purpose of getting a new home, understood best when I couched things more concretely as 'a report on buildings'.

Segregation between the sexes is not as strict in Tunisia as it is in Libya and some Middle Eastern countries. In fact, I initially felt I had more success in interviewing rehoused women. Although I spoke to men whom I felt might be involved in criminal activity, I got the best information out of a small number of articulate men with stable

jobs. The former category tended to close up - or would have been extremely time consuming to interview in detail, and too much contact with one or two people with criminal backgrounds might have jeopardised the whole project.

So the people I talked to were not a scientific sample in the accepted sense of the term. With some of the brighter, more dynamic interviewees, there was a good rapport. They were more than happy to discuss home and *houma*, housing and their new place in the city. I got many useful insights from these people. With a larger proportion, however, exchanges were more limited. Even allowing that I had to spend time explaining my language skills, the resultant information was thin - or so detailed and personalised as to be unuseable. On occasion I would listen to a litany of grievances and difficulties - or on others (perhaps if the person was busy or more circumspect) be told simply that 'the President did a good job'. Sometimes there would be new insights - but the vast majority of material was repetitive, focusing on a few themes. Although there was a young postgraduate French researcher of North African origin working on the Hafsia households using this technique at the time I was visiting the estates, I felt that taping would have been inappropriate - and in many cases would have reduced spontaneity and frankness in discussions.

A concluding interpretation, then, of this 'archaeology' of a housing project, which has now taken on a new shape. I have moved from an artificially constructed archive to personalisation, to a re-presentation of the active voices of residents and planners. The chapter has produced a distinctive picture of the project and the way people involved represent each other and the city. At the centre of the picture is an unusual (for Tunisia) multidisciplinary professional group involved in built environment and social issues. They are crucial to the project's implementation, their vision of the historic city and their technical knowledge of unsafe housing shapes the issue. Out on the periphery are the former inhabitants of the oukalas: for them it is a case of swings and roundabouts. Removed from makeshift or unsafe dwellings, their inner-city precariousness has been replaced with isolation from a familiar world, by locational disadvantage. In the background of my picture are the 'officials' - party *cellule* activists, the local *omda*; their decisional range and impact I could only speculate on, how far clientelist practice was prevalent, how it weighed against a rational allocation of housing - who would admit that they owed much to *kief* ('a helping hand') *ma'arif* (connections) after all? More shadowy still are the 'criminal elements', the *pègre de Tunis* referred to by the planners. Their influence was often suggested, rarely made specific. Their removal from the Médina has been important in the shift of perception of that particular urban space. And finally, back to the Médina, there are the other

supplicants - the crowd of women swathed in cream *sifsaris*, waiting in the *driba*, the great entrance to Dar Lasram, on a Thursday morning, housing day - pushing for a place on 'the list', hopes pinned on the next phase of the project, hanging on while the improvement works are done, making-do in tumbledown *buanderies* (terrace wash-houses) or two-room rented accomodation till the roof reaches the point of no return.

The planners, I intimate through this chapter, have their understanding of urban space, their particular representation, their mental map of old Tunis based in a professional design culture. This is not the map of an oukala inhabitant, hauling the *kadhiya* (shopping), getting kids to school, juggling with various kinds of precarious employment. Satisfactory analysis of life styles in the city would need to take these multiple uses and evaluations of space into account: the micro-practices of the deprived, the macro-practices of those with rare skills and a valued knowledge base. But this is to move into the conclusions of the next chapter. In 'Words from the city', the point was to allow other representations to emerge, the other side beyond the official storyline while maintaining reader awareness of my collecting, filtering, coding function. Rabinow put it that 'formerly there was a discursive knot preventing discussion of exactly those fieldwork practices that defined the authority of the anthropologist'.¹⁶ Hence drawing on an ethnographic tradition going back to Crapanzano¹⁷ and Rabinow¹⁸, with its emphasis on researcher's learning from the Other in a process beset with misunderstanding and occasional flashes of insight, I hope to have brought the key representations of place and group into focus. These, I argue below, are useful for improving our knowledge of the workings of the hegemonic discourse of the paternalist nation state studied here.

¹⁶ Rabinow, Paul (1986) 'Representations are social facts: modernity and post-modernity in anthropology' in James Clifford and George E. Marcus (eds) *Writing culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography* Berkeley: University of California Press, pp.234-261

¹⁷ Crapanzano, Vincent (1977) 'On the writing of ethnography' in *Dialectical anthropology* 2, pp.169-73

¹⁸ Rabinow, Paul (1977) *Reflections on fieldwork in Morocco* Berkeley: University of California Press

ON METHODOLOGY AND PATERNALIST POLICY - SOME CONCLUSIONS

I have now examined the products of two discursive systems - both of which see themselves as operating for the public good - and set these against the complexity and subtlety of literal, everyday descriptions. The initial aim was to try to separate off the semiotic mechanisms in operation, creating latent meanings behind the overt, plausible storyline. Ultimately, I think the research was valuable as it looked at these different but interlocking genres of writing as part of a total system, where meaning takes shape as a result of the pieces' location in a wider discourse. Hence the research is an attempt to integrate the study of language into 'the institutional and social dimensions of the social world'.¹

This concluding chapter runs over what I suppose I must call 'the results' of the research - although I would prefer to avoid any decisive, judgemental conclusion. (Vattimo's concept of *pensiero debole*, 'fragile thought', allows for this, refusing 'to reduce the multiplicity of our cultural signs and images to a systematic synthesis'²). I have been looking at a specific set of representations of authority, deprivation and the city, aiming to promote a critique of the ideology reproduced in the discursive systems enframing these representations. The rhetorical limits of the poverty issue are drawn around an easily identifiable urban object, the *oukala*, a substandard multioccupancy dwelling. The limits could of course have been mapped otherwise - identifying skills and incomes, enabling people to develop so they could choose to move or remain in their social networks, perhaps. But the conceptualisation of this urban poverty problem is based on what Potter would call 'gerrymandering the terrain: selecting and formulating an area which is advantageous and ignoring others'.³

How does this gerrymandering take effect? There follows, in sub-section 7.2, a summary of the discursive procedures at work in the *oukala* narrative, their rules and conventions. Does power take effect through the constant reiteration of discursive formulae? (Perhaps this must remain a hypothesis which remains undisproved). Can the effects of monolithic representation be challenged? After reviewing the techniques of communication, I move on to discuss hegemony and the seeming domination of myth.

¹ Thompson, J.B. (1984) *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* Cambridge: Polity, p.100

² Kearney, Richard (1991) *Poetics of Imagining: from Husserl to Lyotard* London: Routledge, p.182

³ Potter, Jonathan (1996) *Representing Reality* Newbury Park: Sage, p.186

However, before looking at claims about the mystifying power of language, I move into the first part of the conclusion with an account of some of the 'hard results' arising from the research.

7.1 The suburban solution

In post-independence Tunisia, decent housing for all was initially an impossibility as the population grew rapidly with demand outstripping supply. In the capital, the rural immigration trend which had started in the 1930s continued, with new residents swelling the *gourbivilles* and crowding into property left vacant by departing populations - Tuniso-Europeans of modest origins and wealthy Tunisois, thus leading to the phenomenon of multi-occupancy housing - the *oukalisation* of the Tunisian policy jargon - discussed in this dissertation. Overcrowded housing conditions were a nationwide problem, but particularly severe in the capital.⁴ A major government initiative, implemented by the local State, starting in 1990 and ongoing in 1997, was to clear a large number of unsafe dwellings and rehouse 1,200 families in purpose-built suburban estates.

My work on this piece of housing policy was not concerned with producing a substantive policy evaluation. However, although essentially concerned with the texts circulating in different discursive systems related to the issue, I could not ultimately avoid some sort of assessment, albeit of a very preliminary nature. Curiosity led me to undertake simple statistical analysis of some raw data available for two of the re-housing estates, complementing the information I had gleaned from the reports and from the discussions with rehoused people and built environment professionals. My reading of the reports, considering the scant pieces of information available in them in relation to the linguistic forms in which they are embedded, led me to question why policy was presented in such a way - and hence to the importance of context.

The present section on 'the suburban solution' attempts to draw together elements from documents, interviews, discussions and data to raise issues as a basis for a future fuller evaluation of the Oukala Project. This is important both for the discussion of the methodology which follows, and possibly for future re-housing projects of this nature which may be undertaken in other Tunisian and North African cities where multi-occupancy is old

⁴ In 1975, 17 % of the Tunisian urban population was living in one-room; this figure reached 26 % in 1980. For the North-East Region, including Tunis, the percentages were 23.7 % for 1975 and 57.2 % for 1980. Figures from Institut National de la Statistique (1980) *Enquête population-emploi* Tunis: INS, quoted in Guelmani, Abdelmajid (1996) *La politique sociale en Tunisie de 1881 à nos jours* Paris: L'Harmattan, p.166

housing stock is an issue. The cases of Fès, where local planning institutions have existed for some time now, and of Marrakech, Taza⁵ and Essaouira spring to mind. Given the lack of independent judgement and informed open discussion of the issue both in the Tunisian press and professionally-produced writing, I felt that the very least I could do would be to raise some of the substantive issues in this conclusion.

In 1990s Tunisia, owner-occupier status is the family ideal. (The figure of 80 % home ownership is often proudly mentioned in the Tunisian press reporting on housing). The State, in its efforts since independence, clearly considers that there is a basic level of housing below which no-one should fall - hence the *dégourbification* programmes of the 1970s and 1980s, and the creation of specialised agencies to deal with low-income group housing provision⁶, the upgrading of the self-built areas, and, most recently, the Oukala Project. Lower income groups have dealt with their housing needs by acquiring agricultural land close to the main urban centres; building is piece-meal on the basis of individual resources and initiative. This housing is government subsidised to the extent that the State is obliged to install the necessary infrastructure to avoid unrest and maintain a labour force essential to Tunisia's expanding export-oriented companies, many of whose manufacturing plants are situated close to the self-built areas. For the State, the downside of this post-construction activity is that supplementary costs (road widening, expropriation, re-housing) may be entailed in the provision of adequate services.

The three re-housing estates for the central Tunis oukala residents were inserted into this context of unplanned urban sprawl. People with many years - and often whole lifetimes - in a long-established urban neighbourhood found themselves moved to the western periphery of Greater Tunis. Without wishing to deny that safe housing was supplied to a population which had been living in precarious conditions, it emerged from my discussions that the people concerned felt there were serious drawbacks to their new accommodation.

The problems of the re-housing estates have been discussed in detail in chapter 6. The project was conceived with the best of intentions to provide low-cost, sale-by-rent housing for oukala dwellers. In physical terms, the extendable courtyard house was the base-unit; in social

⁵ The Moroccan ANHI (Agence nationale de lutte contre l'habitat insalubre) was undertaking housing upgrading projects in these two cities in 1996.

⁶ The Programme national de réhabilitation de logement rural (PNRLR) and the Agence de réhabilitation et de rénovation urbaine (ARRU) date from 1985. National social security funds like the CNSS (Caisse nationale de sécurité sociale) finance the creation of social rented housing, before moving into housing loan programmes in the early 1990s.

terms, follow-up programmes were created to assist the rehousees in adapting to their new neighbourhoods. In both these areas, problems arose.

The first estate, Khaled Ibn Walid at Douar Hicher (finished 1992), was particularly criticised by its residents - most of whom seemed well aware of the design improvements made in the El Mechtel Estate at El Agba (finished 1994). At Khaled Ibn Walid, the quality of building was poor, sound-proofing inadequate, and there was a major design fault in terms of dwelling-access: the entrance corridor / kitchen opened directly onto the street, creating an unacceptable lack of privacy in a Muslim community. In this first estate, I visited units where ceilings had hairline fissures or were black with damp-related mould. Windows opening directly onto the street had no wrought iron grills, deemed essential for security in Tunisia, (and expensive for bread-line households) and were installed by residents where possible.

Some of these basic design faults were corrected for the second estate, where the ground floor area was 20 m² larger - allowing for the creation of good-sized family homes where funds and intelligence, time and energy were available to build an extension.

A second set of problems relates to dwelling area and family size. Housing units on the oukala estates are built to a simple standard format: in the vast majority of cases, this is 65 m² ground floor area, 42 m² covered for the Khaled Ibn Walid Estate, and some 20 % larger at El Agba - 80 m² of which 43 m² covered.⁷

A third problematic issue was that of location. Families who had lived all their lives with all the advantages of a central location in the city, close to work opportunities, cheap shopping and essential facilities, often of a high standard, were moved to areas remote from all this. Long-standing contacts and friendships became more difficult to sustain. Residents of the new estates found themselves facing long and tiring journeys to work on overcrowded public transport - journeys which absorbed time and, perhaps more importantly, money. Although there clearly are formal work opportunities in the new western neighbourhoods of Tunis - notably in the factories on the Oued El Lil road close to Douar Hicher and at Sidi Hassine, the rehousees find themselves five to seven kilometres away from the city centre with its concentration of shops, offices and constant flow of people. The fact that all of Tunis light-metro lines⁸ converge on the city centre, in addition to the train and many bus lines, means that the centre has a concentration of commercial activity unequalled elsewhere in the city.

⁷ figure from ASM (1995) *Mashru' al-oukayil: an-nataij wa afaq al-mustaqbal*, April 1995, p.4

⁸ Note that none of the new estates is on a light metro line. El Agba is perhaps the closest to the light-metro, being a kilometre or so from the final stop on line 4 at Denden.

And relocation in the western suburbs places the prosperous secondary urban centres of the Menzah business district (Zone urbaine nord), El Manar and Menzah VI two long bus rides away. At the very best, the street vendor of citronade and the porter working in the Marché central found themselves needing to get up even earlier for the busride in to work, while the office cleaner, sometimes a single mother, found herself still on the way back from work at the time children get home from school.

Still on the subject of location, a fourth, more nebulous issue concerns stereotypes of neighbourhood and residents, both the rehoused and those already long established. Many of the oukala residents felt a superiority towards people, many of north-western origin, living in the self-built areas in which the new estates had been implanted. In Tunisia's pecking order of regional status, the poor, rural governorates of the North-West come at the bottom of the pile. Ex-oukala residents, with long experience of the ways of the city, sometimes expressed dislike of their new neighbours, viewing them as backward and uncouth. By the same token, well-established Douar Hicher and El Agba residents saw the new arrivals as bringers of *m'shakil* (problems), to what had been quiet, law-abiding areas. 'They should call it *hayy el-m'shakil*, (problem estate) not *hayy el-meshtel* (nursery estate)', rejoindered one resident of the El Agba area. It would seem that there had been a concentration of households involved in various forms of petty criminality living in the oukalas in the rue des Djerbiens neighbourhood. Many of these were resettled at Douar Hicher, along with other families who, in an English-language context, would probably be described by professionals as multiply-deprived. The criminal activity, 'problems' and new behaviour which came with the ex-oukala people led to their caricaturization in the surrounding area. The women go about bare-headed and often work outside the home, the men were unemployed, some dealt in alcohol or were involved in other nefarious activities. The contrast with the more conservative western suburb people can easily be exaggerated, of course. Nevertheless, the simplistic ways people had for characterising each others communities area symptomatic of a general misunderstanding and a difficult adaptation on both sides.

These problematic issues of built fabric, location and community went unmentioned in the planning documents examined - the very reports on which action is based. Why is this ignored? What 'negative' information can find its way into the reports?

The oukala residents are clearly identified as low income in the planner reports, that much is obvious. The 1995 report *Mashru' al-oukayil*⁹ is very clear on this - in the first phase, 412 households out of 492 (87.7 %) had monthly incomes of below 200 dinars; of these, 218 were

⁹ *ibid* (note 7)

below 100 dinars per month, i.e. 52.9% of households. For the second phase, out of 415 households interviewed and rehoused, 325 households has incomes of below 200 dinars (73.3 %); of these 415 households, 133 were on less than 100 dinars per month, i.e. 32 %.¹⁰ The first estate, according to the report statistics, is clearly much poorer than the second. An initial rent of 31 Dt 900, close to a third of monthly income for half the new estates residents represents a sizeable bite of an already small cake. If water, electricity and cooking / heating fuel bills are added on, this 50 % of households at Douar Hicher could only be surviving thanks to the wages / income of other household members. Looking at the statistics on occupations in the same report, the picture is not one of an educational level implying decent second incomes: at Douar Hicher, 34 % of households are headed by labourers¹¹, 23.3 % by streetvendors and 'craftsmen'; at El Agba, the percentages are similar - 32.7 % labourers and 11 % streetvendors. Both communities comprise high percentages of household heads unable to work (*ghayr qadir 'ala al-'amal*, a category including widows, handicapped and retired people): 18 % at Douar Hicher and 30 % at El Agba.

As I indicated in sub-section 6.3, 'Some statistics', there are numerous problems with this data. What is important to note is that it points to a pattern of severe deprivation. 'Day labourer' is used as a catch all term for unskilled male labour. In mid-1990s Tunisia, a household of two parents and one child would certainly not be living and easy existence on a monthly income of below 200 dinars. Self-provisioning of various kinds and a good family network would be essential to survival. Yet the report which gives these statistics draws no conclusions from them. No figures on pre-re-housing rents / outgoings are given, no conclusions are made about the impact of a 30 dinar rent on the monthly budget. Nor are any figures given on repayments - as far as I could ascertain, perhaps 50 % of residents were no longer paying rent regularly at Douar Hicher in the mid-1990s.

In the planning reports qualitative evaluation of the type I have sketched out above are entirely absent. Negative user feedback cannot be discussed, there is no attempt to review, even five years into the project after 907 families had been moved, social and physical responses to the new environment. Such negative information as there is is left uninterpreted.

The reason for these silences, I would suggest, lies ultimately in the political context - another area which goes simplified to the point of caricature in both planner and press texts. My

¹⁰ All figures from *ibid* (note 7) p.6

¹¹ Tunisian national identity cards give the holder's occupation. The term '*amil yaumi*', a translation of the French *journalier*, 'day labourer' is used to designate unqualified male labour. The term '*atil 'an al-'amal*' ('unemployed') is never used for men. Women may be designated as *bidoun al-'amal* ('without work') or *shu'oun al-bayt* (lit. 'matters of the home').

'evaluation' of the suburban solution thus enters the domain of the corridor discussion, the gossip about meetings and ministers which is nevertheless essential to understanding the project.

As was indicated in the earlier background discussion of the oukala issue (sub-section 4.4), the 1990 project was very much the brainchild of the Mayor of Tunis. It was given presidential backing, perhaps somewhat against the odds. Two parties were vying to implement their proposals for Médina multioccupancy in 1990 when the issue came back onto the government agenda: the Mayor, M'hamd Ali Bouleymen and Ahmed Friaâ, minister of Public Works. In the end, however, it was the Mayor who won the day. The fact that the Municipality had data on the issue, operational experience in the Médina, and a social services department already working with the population ensured that it was chosen over the Ministry to head the project. However, I was assured by several of those involved in the execution of the project that it would never have got off the ground without presidential backing. The appellation *mashru' ri'asi*, *projet présidentiel*, ensured co-operation from all bodies called in to help. It also removed potential opposition: in much of the Tunisian political establishment, it is felt that Tunis is already extremely well served in terms of infrastructure and facilities, and that much more needs to be done for the regions. Hence any new building project or other initiative for the capital is apt to raise storms of protest in committee rooms.

Given this background, it is perhaps unsurprising that negative or critical data on the project has remained unpublished. Investigative journalists, as sub-section 5.3.5 indicated, treat resident discontent with the utmost caution: some faint criticism is allowed to creep into interviews with rehousees. A severe evaluation of progress in 1994 would have undoubtedly prejudiced the execution of phase three, calling into question the competence of Mayor Bouleymen and his technical departments, or for that matter, that of the army, (responsible for the dwelling design in phase one), the contractors and the ARRU. The Mayor's prestige in the 1990s rested on a portrayal of Tunis as a dynamic and above all well-managed, citizen friendly city where there is social justice for all.¹² The Oukala Project was the keystone to the image of the city as a place where even the weakest, the *dhi'af al-hal*, are well-catered for.

The preceding paragraph does not however imply that among the professionals involved there might have been a debate about doing things differently - re-housing in the Médina or on land in a 'better' neighbourhood, perhaps in the more prosperous southern suburbs. My discussions with planners and housing officials at no point suggested that this was the case. The first

¹² Note that the Mayor of Tunis received the Unesco 'Mayors for Peace' prize in 1998. The prize was set up to recognise the work of municipal governments in building social peace.

phase had been difficult enough to implement, given the problems in acquiring land from the Agence foncière d'habitation, the agency dealing with the supply of serviced housing land. With regard to mid-project evaluation, I was told in 1997 on several occasions that this was not yet a concern, and that this would undoubtedly follow once all three phases had been completed.

I would suggest that no evaluation of 'the suburban solution' for the multioccupancy problem was undertaken because, quite simply, things were proceeding to the satisfaction of those implementing the project, those producing text, managing and acting in the context of the discourse systems concerned. I also had a sense that on both the architectural side of things and in the social services, people were overwhelmed by the the scale of the problem, by the detail of the daily management of problems. The institutions concerned, both Municipality and ASM, are obviously short of well-qualified staff for the the volume of work. I had no feeling that there was a long term view of what homes in Tunis, for those stuck in the unsafe housing market, might be, either in terms of design, management or social service provision. However, that is another research project. I need to stress that my brief evaluation here is by no means attempting to apportion responsibility for the problems. The intentions were the best - the results were perhaps unequal, and certainly a further step in the move towards the residential segregation according to socio-economic status which is becoming an increasingly marked feature of Tunis.

So what could have been done? Planners frequently underlined that a presidential project was the only way forward. No-one seemed inclined to accept the hints that a pocket of extreme deprivation had been created at Douar Hicher, and that for many at El Agba and Sidi Hassine the advantage of the new house was off-set by the new difficulties created by living far from family, friends and useful contacts. The challenge for those responsible for future improved low-income housing of this kind is a dual one. There is the technical side of things, how to ensure the replicability of such projects by appropriate management of the available resources. Is sale-by-rent necessarily the best solution?: although widely practised in Tunisia today (and certainly potentially more profitable for the institutions concerned than building up a stock of social housing), it may be unsuitable for the very poor. Then linked to this issue of replicability and suitability, there is the question of whether a more participatory, listening form of planning practice would have avoided creating concentrations of the most inadequate families. Here once again we reach the issue of the nature of communication within and between the politico-professional groups involved, how they listen to and write for each other. This, of course, is the central theme of the dissertation, the representation of policy, deprivation and authority. The appropriateness of my chosen methodology, discourse analysis, to sets of representations related to the Oukala Project is the theme to which I now

turn. Is discourse analysis really such a useful approach to professional and public communication?

7.2 From Médina to media: an adequate analysis of policy and poverty?

Was critical discourse analysis an adequate method for approaching the text corpora I assembled on multioccupancy housing? Was I able to do more than just confirm what a simple content analysis might have revealed? I think so - although I do have a number of reservations.

My project follows the lines of much critical discourse analysis work in the 1990s, attempting to close the gap between linguistics and social science research. I was interested in texts as products of a specific cultural and social environment, shaped by the particular conventions and demand of particular systems of discourse. From a linguistic point of view, I was interested in what Fowler sees as the need for:

acknowledgement and explanation of the discursive structure of the medium itself, the power of the structural minutiae of images and words to impose a value-laden organization on news in the process of articulating it.¹³

So my aim was to tackle the structuring of signification in texts, the shaping of representations - taking representations as possible versions, fictions or identities. Thus different forms of 'reality' construction were to be dealt with, shaped by their social and historical contexts.

I chose to focus on a specific topic domain - all the material I could gather on an aspect of urban policy. Discussion and analysis of this was then related to the wider public discourse of the Tunisian State (sub-sections 5.4 and 5.5). A different approach, focusing, say, on a week's government achievements might have produced rather different results to my own diachronic material, some of it ranging back to 1970. (In a recent English language book¹⁴ on poverty in the news, different authors worked on the theme right from whole page analysis right through to audience reception).

¹³ Fowler, Roger (1991) *Language in the News: discourse and ideology in the press* London: Routledge, p.222

¹⁴ Meinhof, U. and Richardson, K. (eds) *Text, Discourse, and Context: representations of poverty in Britain* London: Longman

The research (as indicated in the previous sub-section), casts light on the relationship between central and local government, institutions and individuals. There is a dominant stereotype of a powerful, benevolent, all-capable leader, the saviour of helpless and patient clients waiting for action.

One positive aspect of this piece of research is that its diachronic aspect reveals some interesting aspects of the development of representations of the housing issue. The producers of today's planning reports are on the whole little aware of the details of what was written in the 1970s. (There has certainly been no concerted effort to keep the vast amount of Médina household information assembled in the 1970s up to date). Nor has the newspaper reporting on the oukala issue been followed over time in this way by anyone except myself (driven by the needs of a research project). Anything otherwise would be surprising.

My research shows no great variation in tone in the press reporting - and I suspect that the analysis of earlier articles would give similar results. The planning reports, however, do exhibit shifts in content and tone. The earliest reports raise awkward issues - there is a mention of the change in ethnic groups, an attempt to produce a detailed picture of Médina housing on the basis of space available / household numbers. One report describes an attempt to build local, grass-roots participation. In the 1990s, this is replaced by reporting on achievements. The documents take on something of the State's rhetoric, with paragraphs mentioning the President of the Republic and the national watchwords 'solidarity' and 'dignity'. A form of interdiscursivity can be observed operating in both directions, the press reporting acquiring the abstraction of planning jargon, the planning documents bearing the marks of the official communicative style. The diachronic development of planning discourse does not display sharp changes, either. Rather the minor drama of the first presidential visit to an estate in 1990 is turned into a leitmotiv of support and goodwill from above. Authority becomes more explicit in the documents - poverty becomes represented as inadequacy, weakness.

All this becomes more comprehensible in the light of context - which was the point I chose to emphasise in the preceding discussion of the 'suburban solution'. What then of the relationship of language and image, the bearers of this narrative of State benevolence? Two discursive systems were examined, and were shown to relate to each other closely. How are the language and image resources available manipulated to produce versions of the world?

My analysis of the planning documents showed a preference for the abstract and impersonal, the removal of agency - not a surprising conclusion, this being an international discursive convention in the production of action-oriented reports written for the public authorities. In the instances examined, authors are anonymous, circumstances of report production elided, voices of the patient groups concerned absent. Journalists writing on the oukala issue in the 1990s would in all likelihood have had access to some of these documents - or extracts, at the very least - and as of the mid-1990s, to promotional material which regurgitates details of the project deemed essential to public comprehension.

The press discourse thus displays similar linguistic features to the planning documents: a preference for abstraction, the removal of agency by nominalisation. Even the lexical categories of people are similar. Where the two sets of documents diverge is in the representation of authority. In the press discourse, the syntax establishes a very clear dichotomy between the all-responsible agent and the deprived recipients of State largesse. This dichotomy is emphasised by the images which accompany the articles: the President listens and gives orders for action. This black and white portrayal of the world is of course highly apparent to the first time reader of the Tunisian press. What a critical reading of syntax and lexis permits is an understanding of the linguistic mechanics of representation. The portrayal of the President as the sole active agent and the use of nominalisation, I would argue, are a crucial part of a particular hegemonic representation of authority and deprivation. The messy, complex business of remodelling the city, with the attendant consequences for resident and user groups, is subsumed in an easy to 'understand' set of abstract entities (renewal, rehabilitation, etc), set within texts where mental process and verbal actions with a single agent dominate. Obligation to the deprived members of society is constantly expressed, but rarely do they express themselves - and never in an article where the President is undertaking action.

This question of who is allowed to speak leads me to another finding of this research, still directly related to language in use, although in this case to the different linguistic forms of written and spoken expression. Here I move towards the interview material gathered and analysed in chapter six, and its implications. The issues are ones of who, when, why - and in what language:

- the President's words are never quoted directly - apart from in a quotation from a speech opening a Municipal promotional document;

- architect-planners and the head of social welfare are interviewed and quoted in French and Arabic language press reporting. The Mayor and other local politicians are never interviewed or quoted in the press - although the Governor of Tunis does appear (very occasionally in photographs accompanying the President). The Mayor is seen listening to the President in the latter's office;
- rehousees and a few residents of poor Médina housing are interviewed, although this is almost exclusively the work of one journalist working for the ruling RCD party's Arabic language daily;
- no views contradicting or criticising the project are expressed. Negative points occasionally expressed would need extra knowledge and good interpretative skills to give rise to any form of debate.

These points are a clear indication of the limits at work when the words of oral sources pass into print. There is a clear selection of what is appropriate at the level of who speaks and where they do so: people's words are being translated from one language to another. This mediation takes its most extreme form in the 'quotation' of rehousees' words. Here the everyday experience of individuals has to be translated from Tunisian Arabic, a language with no universally recognised written form, to Modern Written Arabic, a form which in Tunisia is restricted to educational, legal and the most formal of political settings. The deprived group, even when it is able to reach an arena of public expression, finds its words squeezed to fit the syntactic and lexical constraints of a language close (in its origins) yet remote in terms of conventional usage.

The thematic material assembled in chapter six, 'Words from the city', was an attempt in part to highlight the linguistic constraints prevalent in official representation. From my interviews on the new estates, a very different, much more acerbic lexis for categorising people emerged. Euphemism was only one segment of several in the terminology of everyday discourse - other patterns of experience emerged very strongly which I tried to shape into a representation, at times perhaps a little too personal. Here were new communities, people remaking their lives on new estates with their hopes and bitternesses, trying to adapt - and touched by minor criminality.

My approach to the interview material was different from that used for the written texts, however. When I began the project, I had in mind to record interviews and

subsequently analyse the language. I abandoned this for two reasons. In practical terms, I felt this would have limited people's freedom to talk, and might have had the undesirable effect of drawing too much attention to my research in a sensitive part of the city. Secondly, (and related to time constraints), I felt that the sheer importance of the interview content meant that the analysis of what I was being told would inevitably lead me to focus on substantive issues. The complexity of daily life is far greater than that of the restricted codes used in the written texts analysed. Nevertheless, at least in terms of lexis, I have attempted to give some idea of the contrast in linguistic resources available - or rather deployed - in the written and spoken worlds.

This is not to say that I am arguing in favour of some form of linguistic determinism. Modern written Arabic most certainly has a vocabulary for dealing with policy issues and the city, deprivation and authority. My point is that, on the basis of the evidence in the two corpora analysed, the linguistic resources used are limited, impersonal - and produce a storyline which is neither attractive nor convincing if read critically. I have been dealing with two very situationally distinct forms of language, professional 'sociolects': the journalistic French is far from that of *Le Monde*, that of the planning reports is much less elaborate than that of a similar French report; the Arabic of the planning reports also carries the imprint of the French professional concepts and jargon. Yet for all this, the discussion is limited. It is at this point that knowledge of context becomes vital to explaining the form of text.

Although I have very scant 'hard' evidence, it seems to me clear that the presentation of the oukala issue - and other sensitive issues like it where those most likely to be most discontented with their lot are concerned - is shaped by factors beyond the objective presentation of news. (The issue of policy content and context has already been discussed in the previous section). The writers of these texts, journalists and planners, have to perform as professionals - but the parameters for their public pronouncements are clearly very locally specific. Thus the available language resources have to be stretched and manipulated to state the acceptable. In the Tunisian case under study here, the situation is rendered more complex by the fact that writers are working in a second language: French is a language in which important and specific technical cultures have grown up. The codes of using this have to be acquired and transposed to a context where there is little tradition of public debate over policy issues, where consensus politics dominates. The result is a professional output which is doubly filtered, by being in a second language, and by the conventions of public expression.

Critical textual analysis can tell us little about these contextual parameters. The discourse analyst thus inevitably becomes involved in the conditions of textual production - a point on which I could have perhaps done more work. Discourse analysis is nevertheless useful for exploring how lexical, syntactic and iconic usage is distributed and, I would suggest, orients possible textual readings for political (or other) ends. Following McDonnell¹⁵, 'institutions ... prompt people to speak ... and store and distribute the things that are said' - in specific, goal-oriented ways. Generally, institutions assume that there is only one acceptable world view, be it tacitly or openly. Discourse analysis, then, is a way of opening up these worldviews to scrutiny, of making them amenable to critique. This is Fowler's viewpoint in *Language in the News*: 'the practice of analysis makes ideological structure tangible'.¹⁶

The Tunisian media and professional discourses analysed here offer a dominant view to potential readers. There is a constant reiteration of certain national values in texts with a limited informational and argumentative level. No doubt the ruling groups see it as being in their interest to maintain this communicative level. How might this form of discourse, where opacity and self-censorship are the norm, be characterised? Has discourse analysis been a useful tool to examine what might be called a 'textual enactment' of neopatriarchy? Language is certainly vital to the workings of power. As Fairclough puts it:

... the exercise of power in modern society is increasingly achieved through ideology and more particularly through the ideological workings of language.¹⁷

These mechanisms - as is clear from the case study - can produce a limited set of representations underpinning a dominant order which works in the interests of a few. But is it enough to stop here (where discourse analysis often stops) with the mystifying powers of linguistic structures revealed? I now wish to move the discussion on, relating it to the broader notions of hegemony and myth - and the officially unseen challenges to the naturalising force of State discourse.

¹⁵ McDonnell, D. (1986) *Theories of Discourse: an introduction* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p.4

¹⁶ *ibid* (note 13) p.232

¹⁷ Fairclough, Norman (1989) *Language and Power* London: Longman, p.2

7.3 On myth, hegemony and neopatriarchy

An expression of respect and friendship:

many visitors for Tunisia Day at Habitat II

The Istanbul Hilton was in Tunisian mode last Monday. *Jebba* and *chéchia*, *fouta* and *blouza* gave a festive air to the lobby of the hotel which was extremely animated.

On the ground floor, Tunisian music was playing in the background, and on reaching the main reception room, the national flag and portraits of President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali indicated that Tunisia held the place of honour.

M. Ali Chaouch, minister of Public Works and Housing, welcomed the Tunisia Day guests, a day organized as part of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, Habitat II.

Before reaching the hall, the guests had time to find out about our country through numerous and varied brochures and pamphlets. A video documentary was projected ... allowing, through a round-up of field visits undertaken by the Head of State in the *zones d'ombre*, to realise the extent of the efforts made by President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali with the objective of consecrating values of solid and mutual help.

La Presse, 12 June 1996

Earlier in this dissertation, I explored something of the debates about the nature of the State in the Arab world. Sub-section 4.1, 'Theorising the Tunisian State' raised the theoretical issue of neopatriarchy, a concept akin to the *néopatrimonialisme* of some French language writers. How does the *oukala* narrative link in with the concept of neopatriarchy? Are we dealing with a segment of the hegemonic discourse of a neopatriarchy? What is the *oukala* story, taken as a myth, actually saying?

The *Oukala* Project was certainly on display at Habitat II, part of Tunisia's presentation of itself to the international community as an attractive national entity with all the usual features: characteristic music and dress, a just ruler, effective government based on universal values. We are looking here at an instance of myth, in Barthes' sense of the term. A news piece like the one quoted above - and others like it - are a means of manipulating consensus, I have tried to suggest - and hence of filtering the knowledge and value systems, of organising and promoting a given social imaginary.

In Tunisia, texts like this are home to the tireless cliché, the unavoidable format presentation of policy. Certain attitudes to public policy are naturalised - while the different meanings and diverse concrete effects of policy in society are ignored. This is the naturalization which Barthes refers to as myth, a process conjoining phenomena to create link-points where a sign, inevitable, axiomatic and, of course, totally natural appears. Barthes' most famous example in *Mythologies*¹⁸ was the image of the black soldier saluting the French flag from a cover of *Paris Match*, the naturalisation of French patriotism as compatible with colonial expansion and militarism. In the Tunisian case, the Presidential visit is an example of the deployment of representation to fulfill a strategic need in State communication: interest 'from above' and the necessity for action, regardless of people's capacities; appear as unquestionable. News creators and audiences have an easy to follow format for the generation of stories. There is a consensus concerning this format, and hence the content of what is knowable. As an outside observer, one can speculate about the consequences of the discursive procedures for text generation, repeatedly used over decades. Reading over the *oukala* corpus in the mid-1990s, I could see how even the planning texts are caught up in the dominant discursive procedures of the Tunisian State.

It is tempting to qualify this dominant order of discourse as 'neopatriarchal'. (In what sense, I will develop below). Most contemporary régimes legitimate themselves by displaying their technocratic achievements, their adhesion to the dominant moral order in society. Statements are produced in accordance with the discursive procedures accepted as reasonable. The problem is that the legitimacy acquired from this display is all too often undermined - by low turn-out at elections in a democracy, by the extreme limitations on who has access to the public arena in less liberal nation states. This does not mean, however, that the hegemony of the dominant myth goes unchallenged - on the contrary.

Countering the dominant myth

At least on the surface, the '*oukala* material' offered an unpromising tale for analysis. It came alive, however, as I discovered the counter-views to the hegemonic narrative, how in circumstances which seemed most unpromising, people challenged the official version: 'Yizi min rwayek mta' saba'a novembre' ('Cut the 7th November crap'), says a little girl to her friend on the street; 'they wouldn't leave us here like this if they knew what it was like' (a resident at Douar Hicher); and all the various ways of getting by -

¹⁸ Barthes, Roland (1957) *Mythologies* Paris: Seuil

taking in washing, buying special gum to sell from a cardboard box in the street, a day's labouring, refusing to pay the rent, and so on.

About which the planning professionals in fact know very little. Rather the oukala residents and rehoused people know far more about Dar Lasram. Exchange of information in the *driba*¹⁹, news item read by a literate child, gossip heard at the market. And they also know far more about the middle classes, Tunisia's much publicised *société médiane*, how they live, how they think - after all, they work in their homes, clean their offices, see their neighbourhoods on the television.

At a general level, the planners can only surmise about life in the western suburbs: 'it seems there are many alcoholics among the oukala women', the rumours of criminal activity. Some express a fear of the area: 'Boudria, Douar Hicher, and all that, it's a sort of a *ceinture rouge*' (using the term 'red belt' employed to refer to the working class suburbs of the French capital, threatening the prosperous bourgeoisie of Paris *intra-muros*). When there is conflict, the public news media damp it down. (I can hardly remember reading a dissident article of government policy in the Tunisian press, never mind a reasoned critique). Many of the Douar Hicher people opted not to pay rent - everyone on the estate knew about it, but almost no-one elsewhere in the city, beyond some people in the Municipal administration. Surface consensus was maintained and after all, little would be gained if the situation was disturbed too much: there are still benefits to be gained from the Party, and the *'omda*, the local headman, does handle crucial paper work.

All of which has much to do with the possibility for information and knowledge to circulate. As one successful professional put it, referring to contemporary Tunisia, 'il y a une espèce d'oralité qui devient de plus en plus prégnante' - 'there is a sort of orality which is becoming increasingly important'. News by word of mouth has taken on a major role. When the media version is always the same, any other (interesting) source will be taken up, complementing the formal sources. This now brings me back to my 'artificial archive', and the method used to approach it. As I stressed above in 7.2, CDA undoubtedly enables the researcher a useful method for approaching text - but it must be complemented by knowledge of context. In their own terms, the discourses of technocratic rationality and the nation are symbolically and socially efficient. From the institutional sites of their production they are invested with

¹⁹ *driba*: great entrance hall to a traditional Tunisois seigneurial residence. In the mid-1990s, the *driba* at Dar Lasram was where the oukala residents would gather on a Thursday morning to make their case for a new home or assistance to the municipal social welfare department.

authority. But this authority to speak is, if not undermined, reduced by the counter discourses listening in and evolving in parallel.

Information and communication in a neopatriarchy

Tunisian society, I feel, may thus be seen as having a characteristic information pattern. There is a relationship (or perhaps a break, a *rupture*, would be the better term) between discursive worlds which might be qualified as a salient feature of a neopatriarchal system. (The use of the adjective will be made explicit below). Any State system of policy and information delivery has a store of knowledge and ideas, of ways of communicating them. In some systems, there is significant capacity for the discussion of alternatives - reality is of course diverse, points of view multiple, diverging, colliding. In the case studied here, much is drowned out, as I have tried to show. A form of hegemony is constantly maintained in the public representation of State-society relations (a monolithic discourse which happily is frequently attacked in the give and take of daily exchange).

Using the term 'neopatriarchal' to describe this discursive procedures characteristic of Tunisian public communication is not without its difficulties, of course. Some writers apply the term in a broad way, using it to describe the discourses and relationships prevalent in 'the Arab world'. For Hisham Sharabi²⁰, it applies to both the macrostructures - society and State - and the microstructures of family life; for Sharabi, neopatriarchy is merely an updated patriarchy. Despite the vast advances made in integrating the mass of the population into the polity - notably thanks to military service, mass education, improved communications and the expansion of cities - more democratic forms of government failed to emerge. Instead, there was

a sliding back to new forms of the petty sultanate based, as in the past, on unrestricted personal power, but rendered virtually impregnable (both in the 'progressive' and conservative régimes) by the modern apparatuses of control now available to the State.²¹

²⁰ Sharabi, Hisham (1988) *Neopatriarchy - a theory of distorted change in Arab society* Oxford: Oxford University Press

²¹ *ibid* (note 20) pp.59-60

In these neopatriarchal states, the notion of class and class conflict was resisted by petit bourgeois nationalism and replaced with 'the ideology of national unity and harmonious existence between classes under the benevolent rule of the leader.'²²

In these states, despite their outwardly modern facture, the societal structures remain strongly traditional, dominated by the father figures at national and household level. Hence State activity tends to reinforce 'particular normative views of women and the family, often but not exclusively through the law',²³ as Moghadam puts it. Attention to the family issue may be useful in building national loyalty, while strengthening the patriarchal family unit may be convenient for the welfare functions it performs.²⁴ The whole neopatriarchal system is seen as underpinned by a religio-legal dictum: 'to obey the ruler although unjust is mandatory, and rebellion may under no circumstances be justified'²⁵, for in Arab traditional society the will of the ruler is conditioned by God, thus legitimacy arises from divine right, not consent.

Consent, however, must be created and maintained by new rulers for their régimes. This requires a public presentation of the ruler and his actions, which in the régimes of the Middle East often pretend to charismatic status - 'a claim made in discourse and .. best studied through the analysis of discourse'.²⁶ (It is here that the Gramscian concept of hegemony becomes useful, but for this, see below). Legitimacy is claimed and reaffirmed in exaggerated displays of public imagery (q.v. the public art of the presidential portrait, practised on a huge scale in Iraq, Libya and Syria) or in a lower key in the omnipresent official photograph and the repeated mentions in public news broadcasts. Each leader develops what Drake and Gaffney (writing of France) describe as a 'discursive persona'²⁷, often bordering on caricature, for which 'the main resource ... for both received and innovative images is the culture itself'²⁸ The difficulty today, in a State like Tunisia where the polity is increasingly aware of styles

²² *ibid* (note 20) p.132

²³ Moghadam, V. (1993) *Modernizing Women: gender and social change in the Middle East* London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, p.112

²⁴ *ibid* (note 23) pp.112-13

²⁵ *ibid* (note 20) p.53

²⁶ Drake, H. and Gaffney, J. (1996) *The Language of Leadership in Contemporary France* Aldershot: Dartmouth, p13

²⁷ *ibid* (note 26) p.13

²⁸ *ibid* (note 26) p.28

of rule elsewhere is how a highly centralised leadership style can be squared with a move towards a more open style.

On hegemony: ideological general anaesthetic or result of pragmatic consent?

But how is it that this public communication pattern resists. Perhaps by using the concept of hegemony I can shed light on this. I wish to provide a short account of the concept before linking back into the themes of neopatriarchy and ideology, language and myth in contemporary Tunisian society

Hegemony is the term used by Gramsci to explain the survival of the dominant group and its interests.²⁹ (The concept was evolved in part to explain the failure of Italy, in the post-World War One period, to move towards revolution and the overthrow of the bourgeoisie). In Marxist discourse, the term is generally used to signal:

a form of social and political 'control' which combines physical force or coercion with intellectual, moral and cultural persuasion or consent.³⁰

In contemporary Western societies, Gramsci viewed the second, consensual aspect at being of prime importance:

The methodological criterion on which our own study must be based is the following: that the supremacy of the social group manifests itself in two ways, as 'domination' and as 'intellectual and moral leadership'. A social group dominates antagonistic groups, which it tends to 'liquidate' and to subjugate perhaps even by armed force; it leads kindred and allied groups. A social group can and indeed must already exercise 'leadership' (*direzione*) before winning governmental power ...; it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to 'lead' as well.³¹

²⁹ 'Gramsci extended the notion of hegemony from its original application to the perspectives of the working class in a bourgeois revolution against a feudal order, to the mechanisms of bourgeois rule over the working class in a stabilised capitalist society' Anderson, P. (1976) 'The antinomies of A. Gramsci' in *New Left Review* 35, pp.2-42

³⁰ Ransome, Paul (1992) *Antonio Gramsci: a new introduction* London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, p.135

³¹ Gramsci, A. (1971) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (edited and translated by Q. Hoare and G. Nowell-Smith) London: Lawrence and Wishart, pp.57-58, quoted in Paul Ransome (note 30) p.135

There is thus a dual strategy in use, hegemony maintained by use of persuasion through force or acceptance. Gramsci calls this the 'dual perspective', which he likens to Macchiavelli's Centaur, half-human and half-animal. The dual perspective works at two fundamental levels:

They are the levels of force and consent, authority and hegemony, violence and civilisation, of the individual moment and the universal moment.

Although the Gramscian notion of hegemony is useful for analysing the rise and establishment of a social group, notably from the cultural point of view, it is not easy to see how it explains challenge and resistance within the system. The working class may be maintained in a subordinate position, but it has all sorts of resources up its sleeve to subvert the dominant position and survive. (Gramsci sees coercion as being mainly the purview of the State institutions, while 'consensual control derives from the institution of civil society'³²)

This account of hegemony has not gone unchallenged. From anthropology, James C. Scott has attacked the basic premise, of hegemony being fundamentally about 'the misrepresentation of "objective" interests'.³³ Firstly, there is a problem with the term itself 'since it often implies that a hegemonic ideology is the sole creation of an élite'.³⁴ The key point, however, relates to the fact that in the social order studied by Scott (a changing Malay agricultural village), the values used by villagers to criticize the big cultivators are also 'the professed values - within the hegemony - of the local élites'.³⁵ Thus:

Properly understood, any hegemonic ideology provides, within itself, the raw materials for contradictions and conflict.³⁶

So it is that in Scott's Sedaka, the old traditional ways, the values of helpfulness which all subscribed too, are really no longer of use to the great landlords and are

³² *ibid* (note 30) pp.143-44

³³ Scott, James C. (1985) *Weapons of the Weak: everyday forms of peasant resistance* New Haven: Yale University Press, p.337

³⁴ *ibid* (note 33) p.336

³⁵ *ibid* (note 33) p.336

³⁶ *ibid* (note 33) p.336

disappearing. However, the ironic thing is that the poor villagers can turn this formerly hegemonic worldview back on the farmowning rich; Scott tells us that:

... the ideological weapon the poor now find so serviceable was earlier fashioned and handed to them by the ... rich cultivators and landlords.³⁷

Thus, from this standpoint, hegemony based on consensus does not necessarily mean the imposition of a single world view, 'the general anaesthesia which a hegemonic ideology is presumed to be'.³⁸ This is clearly the case at all levels of involvement in the Tunis oukala story, from the journalist noting the self-imposed limits to reporting ('Our politicians have a defect; they want everything to be for the best in the best of all possible worlds'), to the planners describing how they deal with the *fait du prince*; from the proud homeowner detailing the ruses needed to get the new home to the comments of those who had decided that their homes were indeed a gift of the President.

So what happens if the consensus, if the unseen 'hegemonic bargain' collapses? Is it at risk of collapsing? For the moment, the Tunisian system would seem to meet the twin preconditions for the successful maintenance of consent:

First [hegemonic ideology] must claim that the system of privilege, status and property it defends operates in the interest not only of élites but also of subordinate groups whose compliance or support is being elicited. To do this, it must, in effect, make implicit promises of benefits for subordinate groups that will serve as the stake which they too have in the social order. Second, as Gramsci realised, the dominant class must make good on at least a portion of these promises if it is to have the slightest hope of gaining compliance.³⁹

Tunisia, as was discussed in chapter four, is increasingly integrated into the international division of labour; foreign investment speeding up with the liberalisation of the economy and the development of new financial institutions.⁴⁰ Yet the

³⁷ *ibid* (note 33) p.340

³⁸ *ibid* (note 33) p.336

³⁹ *ibid* (note 33) p.337

⁴⁰ On this, for example, see Ghilès, F. (1997) 'Trade and investment across the Mediterranean' in *Middle East International* 55, 16 May 1997, pp.17-19

framework within which State-society relations are portrayed in the media remains firmly rooted in a patriarchal past. So too are decision making processes, according to various commentators; these processes have been described as 'highly centralised' and lacking in any transparency.⁴¹ Yet in the terms necessary for the maintenance of healthy State hegemony, the terms set down above are clearly being met: the grand narrative of the Tunisian State, guided along the path of progress and development by a compassionate and fair leader carries the day, for distributional aims are being met. The State can rationalize away its rather limited provision for the exercise of democratic rights by emphasizing the benefits currently provided: peace, growth, basic rule of law, a moral environment in line with the prevailing religious belief pattern. All this is rooted in material reality, and as the gains are clear, (and there is the force of habit, too), and pressure can probably be applied within the highly centralised system to make things happen, the strangely blank mask of official media communication remains.

Ideology and consent, power and discourse

The ideological position of the Tunisian State, as in other nation states, is thus based on consent (and individual room for manoeuvre). For consent building, communication is vital, and here we reach the role of language, of text and image, in the production of hegemony. Foucault here has much in common with Gramsci regarding this production of consent. For Foucault too, the workings of power are based on consent by the dominated. But where Gramsci underscores the directedness of power, 'that originates somewhere and proceeds with a certain purpose'⁴², Foucault emphasizes its pervasiveness and the role of language in the production / reproduction of legitimacy. He challenges the linear narratives of history, notes breaks in the 'objective' rational story, underlines the differences between systems. But it is his approach to discourse which I have found helpful in examining the practices of official written discourses in contemporary Tunisia.

Where Foucault builds on from Gramsci is in his notion of the way discourses dominate, excluding, silencing the language of other discourses. From one of Foucault's later articles, 'Politics and the study of discourse'⁴³, come some points

⁴¹ *ibid* (note 23) p.18

⁴² Holub, Renate (1992) *Antonio Gramsci. Beyond Marxism and postmodernism*. London: Routledge, p.200

which seem to me relevant for investigating a given politico-social environment. Foucault makes three recommendations:

1. Treat past discourse not as a theme for commentary which would revive it, but as a monument to be described in its character disposition.
2. Seek in the discourse not its laws of construction, as do the structural methods, but its conditions of existence.
3. Refer the discourse not to the thought of the mind or the subject which have given rise to it, but to the practical field in which it is deployed.⁴⁴

Foucault thus argues that discourses are 'limited practical domains'.⁴⁵ There is no metadiscourse, history is fragmented, with each fragment having a threshold, a process of birth and a decline and disappearance. And he suggests that the historian of ideas should work to discover 'the operations exercised by different "discoursing" subjects'.⁴⁶ These, it seems to me, are fitting aims for the discourse analyst.

On two powerful myths, representation and context

The texts of the oukala corpora are underpinned by two pervasive myths, one of which has extremely wide currency in contemporary Tunisian society. Their study is interesting and worthwhile for what they tell use about the operation of the political system; but more interesting still is the context of these representations of authority and poverty and expertise - the processes at work may be more subtle than the myths would suggest.

The corpora are dominated by the myths of the (neo)patriarch and his dependents, and the utopia of the knoweable, repairable city. The former is the more pervasive, situated in both parts of the corpora, and present even in everyday discussion among social agents. Both myths operate through a transfer / creation of meaning. Both are concerned with ideal government action.

⁴³ Foucault, Michel (1978) 'Politics and the study of discourse' in *Ideology and Consciousness* 3, pp.7-26

⁴⁴ *ibid* (note 40) p.15

⁴⁵ *ibid* (note 43) p.16

⁴⁶ *ibid* (note 43) p.16

The myth of 'patriarch and dependents' may be seen as telling us how the Tunisian leadership (*direzione*, to use Gramsci's term) imagines its ideal polity - and as an attempt to get this view accepted by its audience. It is telling people what their role in society is, be they deprived or comfortably off. Strangely, perhaps, the patriarch is insubstantial in this context: he is seen, heard making formal pronouncements - but little is actually known about him. As already stressed, the value of the press pieces lies in their creation of a link - not in their content. They continually reiterate an already established relationship, tying the world of the home (the actual site of family reproduction) to the world of the imagined community (the referent). For many readers, as they meet this transfer, any inklings of contestation may be subverted. These press pieces, purveyors of the myth of 'patriarch, polity and dependents' lay down clear positions for social agents. Housing is made into a symbol - and we found out very little about the process of creating housing. Ultimately it is the images of the referent world which remain, not those of the housing project.

A similar process is at work in the second myth, 'the city ordered'; In the first myth, the plot was one of a benevolent *deus ex machina* bringing relief to the poor; in the second, it is the city, 'an urban fabric' which is relieved of blemishes and growths. The French term *tissu* provides an almost surgical metaphor. This myth brings together the physical world of the built form with the world of the plan, the ideal project ordering the city. Here again the images of the referent are those which remain: professional status is confirmed, reinforced, and we learn little of actual developments in the city.

What is the impact of these myths - the former imbued with neopatriarchy, the latter with rationalist professionalism. I would argue that they have enabled the transfer of large numbers of deprived people from deteriorating neighbourhoods - not always to their full advantage. And I would argue that they have, in part, ensured that this shifting of populations does unchallenged. Such is the logic of these myths. A society based on solidarity, a city studied and repaired have powerful metaphorical resonances - and imply value judgements. The result of these myths, of their discursive procedures, is a naturalisation of the discursive order - and the maintenance of a situation favourable to the 'haves' of society.

To return to the first myth, similar variations can be found in other North African states, suffused with religious language in Morocco, with the peculiar ideology of the Green Book in Libya. 'Patriarch, polity and dependents' is suggesting how Tunisians, as individuals, relate to government. The meaning is communicated, and is there to

be interpreted. But can it be argued that this is a neopatriarchal myth representative of the way social agents operate in Tunisian society?

Here I return to the opening paragraphs of this sub-section on myth, hegemony and neopatriarchy. I stressed the naturalisation of attitudes to government, the discursive procedures of these texts of the tireless cliché - but I also underlined the moves to counter the hegemonic narrative. Our two myths suggest a social environment dominated by binary oppositions of President and people, of experts and city. The execution of the Oukala Project was more subtle than the myths would allow, however.⁴⁷

The official designation *projet présidentiel* would suggest full control of the project by the Head of State. Despite this appellation, the President does not seem to have provided leadership. Rather he remained detached (despite the occasional high-profile visit), providing the prestigious label, while the Mayor of Tunis, who had secured presidential approval, ensured the implementation of a programme laid down by established professionals. The passive support of the President, and the Mayor's activeness in team building and raising funding produced an institutional and financial context essential for a small group of professionals, essentially architect-planners, to pursue project objectives. The Oukala Project was thus arguably very different from other Tunisian *projets présidentiels* (although this would need further research for confirmation). This is by no means pluralistic policy making, but it does suggest a more complex model than our neopatriarchal myth suggests. The same was true for the 'unheard accounts' assembled in chapter six. Thus the rhetoric of neopatriarchy should be treated with caution. Although the Tunisian Republic can be seen as characterised by a great concentration of power at the top of the government hierarchy, there are a myriad of social agents involved in any given aspect of the policy process; in the Oukala Project, chief among them were a city mayor and his technical support keen to make their mark and act to save people and a traditional urban fabric.

Thus a more subtle picture emerges. Reducing State activity with a blanket neopatriarchy theory helps those who would see North African and Middle Eastern régimes in essentialist terms, based on a patronage system which:

⁴⁷ The following should be read with sub-sections 4.4 ('Symbol of a caring State: outline of the Oukala Project') and 7.1 ('The suburban solution') in mind.

... displaces legality and renders public institutions superfluous, takes away the individual's claim to autonomous right.⁴⁸

In written Arabic, 'the literate language of the neopatriarchal city'⁴⁹, monological accounts of policy may be legion - but this does not mean that myths will not fade and change. A more useful approach to policy analysis in such centralised states, while recognising the importance of the prince, must consider the less visible ways shaping policy. This is ultimately the most salient characteristic of the neopatriarchy - the official monologue, and the plurality of unwritten, unrepresented influences and interests. The media offer a basic fiction, providing a restricted (and restricting) repertoire of stereotypes of the polity. Communication is asymmetrical (at least on the surface) - but ultimately its products are only representations. There is no original model which is copied. The endlessly circulating representations of authority, deprivation and the city are so ludicrously limited that eventually other representations must emerge. For the moment, unsuitable representations can be kept out of sight, excluded by socio-linguistic convention. It is unlikely, however, that the world view naturalised in the media fictions and the planning reports will continue unchallenged as the negative aspects of the project become apparent.

Roland Barthes, in a characteristic phrase, suggests that myths have their history and geography:

a myth ripens because it spreads ... it is perfectly possible to draw what linguists call the isoglosses of myth, the lines which limit the social region where it is spoken.⁵⁰

This, in a way, is what I have attempted to do here in this dissertation. However, I want to stress that these myths have their place in the socio-political *imaginaire* 'which represents the ensemble of mythic or symbolic discourses which serve to motivate and guide [a society's] citizens'.⁵¹ With the help of myth, a legitimacy

⁴⁸ *ibid* (note 20) p.46

⁴⁹ *ibid* (note 20) p.95

⁵⁰ Barthes, Roland (1957) *Mythologies* trans. Annette Lavers New York: Hill and Wang, p.152 (French original, p.240)

⁵¹ Kearney, Richard (1991) *Poetics of Imagining: from Husserl to Lyotard* London: Routledge, p.158

deficit is apparently filled, the rationality of a project maintained. A mythical representation is thus not just 'a fetish of false consciousness'.⁵² It must be recognised as a mode of discourse 'where someone actually says something to somebody about something'⁵³ - and often with concrete effects.

But what remains after the study of myth, of the discourse in which it is embedded? Are we left with the situation, suggested by Foucault, in an oft quoted phrase, where:

... the visible order, with its permanent grid of distinctions, is now only a superficial glitter above the abyss.⁵⁴

Or perhaps the way is open for a less repressive discursive format. Emphasising the artificiality of utopias, I see that developing the analysis of discourse as important for understanding how inequalities of access to resources and public expression takes root, and how these fundamental inequalities are shaped and naturalised in language.

⁵² *ibid* (note 52) p.177

⁵³ *ibid* (note 52) p.177

⁵⁴ Foucault, Michel (1970) *The Order of Things* New York: Random House, p.251

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Corpus of planning documents in French and Arabic

Documents are listed by publishing organisation, date, title and number of pages

I cannot pretend that this is an exhaustive collection of documents relative to the oukala issue. Nevertheless, in the absence of any well-collated archive bringing together all the documents produced on the multioccupancy issue, I feel that it is a fairly representative selection of professional discourse on this aspect of housing policy in the Médina produced since 1970. Where available, the names of document authors are given in brackets. The following list gives the documents consulted for the dissertation, (some of which are analysed in section 5.2) in chronological order, each item being numbered.

1. Association Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis (1970a) *Médina - oukalisation - Tunis* (G. Cladel and P. Revault with Hédi Eckert) pp.15
2. ASM de Tunis (1970b) *La Médina de Tunis, faubourg ou gourbiville* (Hédi Eckert)
3. ASM de Tunis (1972a) *Oukalisation de la Médina de Tunis : étude des conditions d'occupation d'un habitat urbain historique* pp.110
4. ASM de Tunis (1972b) *La Médina de Tunis : essai de réhabilitation* (J. El Kafi) pp.27
5. ASM de Tunis (1972c) *Rapport Médina plan de sauvegarde* (R. Baehrel and R. Bellalouna) pp.42
6. ASM de Tunis (1975) *Opération de rénovation et de réhabilitation dans le centre historique de la Ville de Tunis : la Médina* (Mohamed El Bahi) pp.28
7. ASM de Tunis (1977) *Tentative de réhabilitation dans un quartier de la Médina* paper given at the seminar *Villes historiques : sauvegarde et réhabilitation*, Tunis, April 1976, pp.15 (
8. ASM de Tunis (1981) *Réhabilitation et rénovation* (proceedings of the second commission at the *Regional Housing Conference*, Dar Lasram, February 1981) pp.24

9. Ministère de l'Habitat (Direction de la réhabilitation et de la rénovation) (1983) *L'expérience de la Tunisie en matière de réhabilitation et de rénovation* pp.13
10. ASM de Tunis (n.d., mid-1980s) *La réhabilitation du patrimoine immobilier: aspects sociaux techniques et financiers à travers l'expérience de la Hafsia* (Lotif Bouzouita) pp.7
11. ASM de Tunis (1986) *Projet Oukala / Kherbas dans la Médina de Tunis : règlement d'urbanisme* pp.29
12. Agence de rénovation et de réhabilitation urbaine (1991) *Planification urbaine et urbanisme opérationnel : créer les instruments du redéveloppement urbain* (R. Bellalouna) pp.11
13. ARRU (1991) *Note A : Amélioration de l'habitat dans la Médina de Tunis : procédure en cours pour la gestion des dossiers* pp.3
14. ASM de Tunis / Harvard University, Graduate School of Design (1994) *Etude de l'impact social et économique du Projet Hafsia* pp.82
15. Ministère de l'Intérieur, Municipalité de Tunis (1995) *Projet "Oukalas" (troisième tranche)* pp.21
16. ASM de Tunis (1995) *Mashru' al-ouka'il: an-nata'ij wa asfaq al-mustaqbal* (The Oukala Project: results and future perspectives) pp.14 plus plans and photographs
17. ARRU (1995) *Note - Projet Oukalas (troisième tranche)* pp.4
18. Ministère de l'Équipement et de l'Habitat (1996) *Rapport national pour la deuxième conférence des Nations unies sur les établissements humains* (Habitat II - Istanbul) pp.83 (including special supplement on model projects)
19. Ministère de l'Équipement et de l'Habitat (1996) *Etude sur la réhabilitation de l'habitat vétuste et insalubre en Tunisie (livre 1) bilan - diagnostic* (study undertaken by consultants URAM / STECOT, October 1996) pp.229
20. ASM de Tunis (1998) *Le Projet Oukala* (presentation for the project's candidature for the Agha Khan Prize for Architecture) pp.6

Appendix 2

Press corpus: list of articles in French

date / name of publication / title of article/ text type (sub-genre) and author / images

As regards text type / sub-genre, I use the following classifications: info-flash; short info; information; major article; feature article; editorial or comment.

- 1 **21 July 1983 / *L'Action* / 'On ne construira plus hors la loi' / feature article, Chedhy Laifa / images of poor, self-built housing and snapshot gov. of Tunis**
- 2 **13 October 93 / *La Presse* / 'Des solutions à dégager pour atténuer l'encombrement' / news, anon**
- 3 **16 November 93 / *Le Renouveau* / '87 nouveaux logements distribués' / feature, S. Ghannouchi-Béhi**
- 4 **17 November 93 / *Le Temps* / 'Activités ministérielles - relogement des habitants des "Oukalas"' / news / anon**
- 5 **28 January 94 / *Le Temps* / 'Mesures pour davantage de logements sociaux' / news / anon p.2**
- 6 **13 October 94 / *Le Temps* / 'Un total de 82 familles relogées' / news / anon p.2**
- 7 **13 October 94 / *La Presse* / 'Un nouveau programme de relogement de 402 familles' / news / anon p.4**
- 8 **13 October 94 / *La Presse* / 'Un cadre de vie digne et décent' / editorial / anon p.1**
- 9 **13 October 94 / *Le Renouveau* / '402 familles bénéficiaires de la 2ème tranche' / news / anon p.2**
- 10 **14 October 94 / *Le Temps* / 'Visite inopinée du président Ben Ali à El Agba - L'acquis et le suivi' / news / anon p.2**
- 11 **14 October 94 / *La Presse* / 'La Cité promise' / front page feature / anon p.1**
- 12 **14 October 94 / *Le Renouveau* / 'Le rêve concrétisé' / front page feature / anon p.1**
- 13 **15 October 94 / *Le Renouveau* / 'Fierté et reconnaissance' / major feature / Adel Abdeallaoui p.9**
- 14 **15 October 94 / 'La Solidarité dans la transparence' / editorial, anon p1**
- 15 **15 October 94 / *Le Temps* / 'El Agba et l'obligation de solidarité' / editorial, Mustapha Khammari p.1**

- 16 30 October 94 / *La Presse* / 'Tunis - projet des oukala : Tout est bien qui finit bien' / major feature, Chokri Gharbi p.3
- 17 1 December 94 / *La Presse* / "'El Agba" a son aire de jeu' / news, L.C. p.6
- 18 28 January 95 / *Le Renouveau* / 'Davantage de logements sociaux' / news, anon p.2
- 19 28 January 95 / *La Presse* / 'Mesures pour dynamiser le logement social' / news / anon p.1
- 20 9 March 95 / *Réalités* no 488 / 'Repères - Il était une fois les oukala' / photo flash / anon
- 21 30 March 95 / *Le Temps* / 'Construction de près de 360 logements sociaux' / news / TAP p.2
- 22 30 March 95 / *La Presse* / 'Un plus pour le remplacement des oukalas' / news / anon p.1
- 23 30 March 95 / *Le Renouveau* / 'Le droit à la dignité' / editorial ("bulletin") / A. Dermech p.1
- 24 30 March 95 / *Le Renouveau* / 'Poursuite du programme de remplacement des oukalas' / news / anon p.2
- 25 1 April 95 / *Le Temps* / 'Le contenu du projet intègre de rénovation et de réhabilitation' / news feature / Habiba Mejri p.3
- 26 27 April 95 / *La Presse* / 'Oukalas : la troisième phase permettra la construction de 360 logements' / major feature / Chokri Gharbi p.8
- 27 27 April 95 / *Le Renouveau* / 'Un musée pour la ville de Tunis' : feature article / Sarra Rajhi p.8
- 28 28 April 95 / *Le Temps* / 'Les oukalas au centre du débat' / feature article / Hamida El Bour p.2
- 29 11 May 95 / *La Presse* / 'Pour que la joie soit totale' / news / anon p.1 and following
- 30 11 May 95 / *La Presse* / 'La course contre la montre' / editorial, anon
- 31 May 95 / *L'Observateur* / 'La femme est la mère de l'humanité' : feature article, interview based, Mouldi M'barek
- 32 14 May 95 / *La Presse* / 'Les familles de Borj Boulahia emménagent dans leurs nouvelles villas' / news / CC
- 33 June 95 / *La Presse* / 'Un projet d'embellissement et d'animation pour la capitale' / news / anon p.1

- 34 July 95 / *Le Temps* / 'Tunis à la recherche d'un visage humain' / feature article / Leïla Haddad p.3
- 35 August 95 / *Réalités* no 492 / 'Les "oukalas" sur la pente raide' / short feature article / Ahmed Jabeur
- 36 May 96 / *Le Temps* / 'Propreté et embellissement encore et encore' / feature article / Zakia Azak p.2
- 37 June 96 / *Le Temps* / 'Plénière à la Chambre des députés : Troisième phase du projet relatif aux oukalas' / news / Hamida El Bouraoui p.2
- 38 June 96 / *La Presse* / '402 logements à Sidi Hassine' news / Chokri Gharbi p.3
- 39 May 97 / *La Presse* / 'Sauvegarder la spécificité du centre en tant qu'abri provisoire' / leader article, p.1

Appendix 3

Press corpus: list of articles in Arabic

date / name of publication / title of article/ text type (sub-genre) and author / images

As regards text type / sub-genre, I use the following classifications: info- flash; short info; information; major article; feature article; editorial or comment.

(N.B. I have opted for the standard Tunisian transliterations of the newspaper titles)

- 1 3 June 1993 / *El Hurriya* / 'ASM - collapsing houses .. an identity fades away' / opinion appeal (info-flash) anon / photo of decaying house (courtyard)
- 2 16 November 1993 / *El Hurriya* / 'The Head of State concerned about ensuring the dignity of the weak' / information, anon
- 3 16 November 1993 / *Es-Sabah* / 'The oukalas in the capital - regularization of 87 families' situation' / information, Salah Attia / snap of minister of Interior
- 4 28 January 1994 / *Es-Sabah* / 'Measures to increase the supply of social housing' / information, anon / presidential snap
- 5 28 February 1994 / *Es-Sabah* / 'Rehousing of 415 families' / info-flash, anon
- 6 11 June 1994 / *El Hurriya* / 'From the oukalas to Hayy Khaled Ibn Walid' / major article (info), Jalila Souid / photo of inhabitants, street
- 7 20 July 1994 / *Es-Sabah* / 'Distribution of a second tranche of homes' / info news (short), Monia El-Youssoufi / photosnap of Mayor of Tunis
- 8 20 July 1994 / *Ech-Chorouk* / 'Handover of 42 homes in the El Agba area' / info-flash, anon.
- 9 13 October 1994 / *Er-Ray El-'Am* / 'Improvement of living conditions in residential areas of the capital' / short info, anon / presidential desk

- 10 13 October 1994 / *El Hurriya* / 'Presidential concern for the rehabilitation and sewage projects and improvement of living conditions and city enhancement' / short info, anon / presidential desk
- 11 14 October 1994 / *El-Hurriya* / 'Provision of the necessary living conditions and more concern for the outside environment of the estate', anon / 3 large photos (President with rehousees)
- 12 14 October 1994 / *Er-Ray El-'Am* / 'National seminar on municipal information - Al-Kallel: municipal structures welcome all (forms of) criticism of use to the citizen / major article, anon / photo: men in suits, ribbon cutting
- 13 14 October 1994 / *Er-Ray El-'Am* / 'The journalist is the link between citizen and municipality' / major article, Naïma Debbachia El-Kadari
- 14 14 October 1994 / *Er-Ray El-'Am* / 'The President on a surprise visit to the El-Agba Estate - examination of the situation on the estate and the residents' living conditions' / short info, anon / photos: President and locals and men in suits
- 15 15 October 1994 / *El Hurriya* / 'After the President's visit to the El-Agba area - the residents: joy and gladness' / feature article, Jehla Souid / photos: street and residents
- 16 25 October 1994 / *Es-Sabah* / 'The oukala residents between yesterday and today - after the building of houses and the creation of basic infrastructure come the green spaces / long news, anon / photo: modern furnished home interior
- 17 19 November 1994 / *El-Hurriya* / 'In Sidi Mansour and Sidi El-Baili in the Old City: good news for the weak - a new housing project' / major human interest story, anon / photo snaps of residents; photos of area, women and old men portrayed.
- 18 26 November 1994 / *El Hurriya* / 'Mme Hassan Hamdan: the capital's Municipal Social Service's Department deals with many cases' - 'After Douar Hicher and El-Agba will the Oukala Project continue? / interview-based feature, anon / photo: Mme Hamdan
- 19 1 December 1994 / *Es-Sabah* / 'Programme to end the oukalas: distribution of 26 title deeds to the beneficiaries in the Borj Zouara area' / short info, Salah Attia

- 20 28 January 1995 / *Er-Ray El-'Am* / 'Measures for the provision of more social housing' / short news, anon
- 21 30 March 1995 / *Es-Sabah* / 'Housing justice' / opinion, Adessalem El-Hajj Kacem
- 22 30 March 1995 / *Es-Sabah* / 'The President chairs the inner ministerial council on the housing sector: the third stage in the programme to replace the dangerous oukalas' / short news, anon
- 23 30 March 1995 / *El-Hurriya* / 'Cabinet meeting chaired by the President continues examination of the housing sector: conservation of oukalas and replacement of dangerous ones' / short news, anon / photo: President chairing meeting
- 24 30 March 1995 / *Ech-Chorouk* / '360 new homes for residents of the oukalas and conservation of 400 buildings' / short news, anon / photo: Presidential snapshot
- 25 14 April 1995 / *El-Hurriya* / 'The Oukalas: renewed presidential concern for improving living conditions and housing' / major news article, anon / photos: presidential visit in 1991 to house and women in courtyard (used previously); oukala photos and street on Khaled Ibn Walid estate Hasna Hamdan repeat photo
- 26 14 April 1995 / *El-Hurriya* / 'After Douar Hicher and El-Agba: new social housing estate at Sejoumi for oukala residents; conservation and restoration of 400 threatened buildings; loans ... and exemption from municipal tax for those restoring'
- 27 15 April 1995 / *El-Hurriya* / 'At the Social Welfare Department of the capital's municipality - social cases ... rapid solutions and others delayed, food and housing assistance' / major human interest feature, Jalila Souid / photos of social services at work in ASM
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