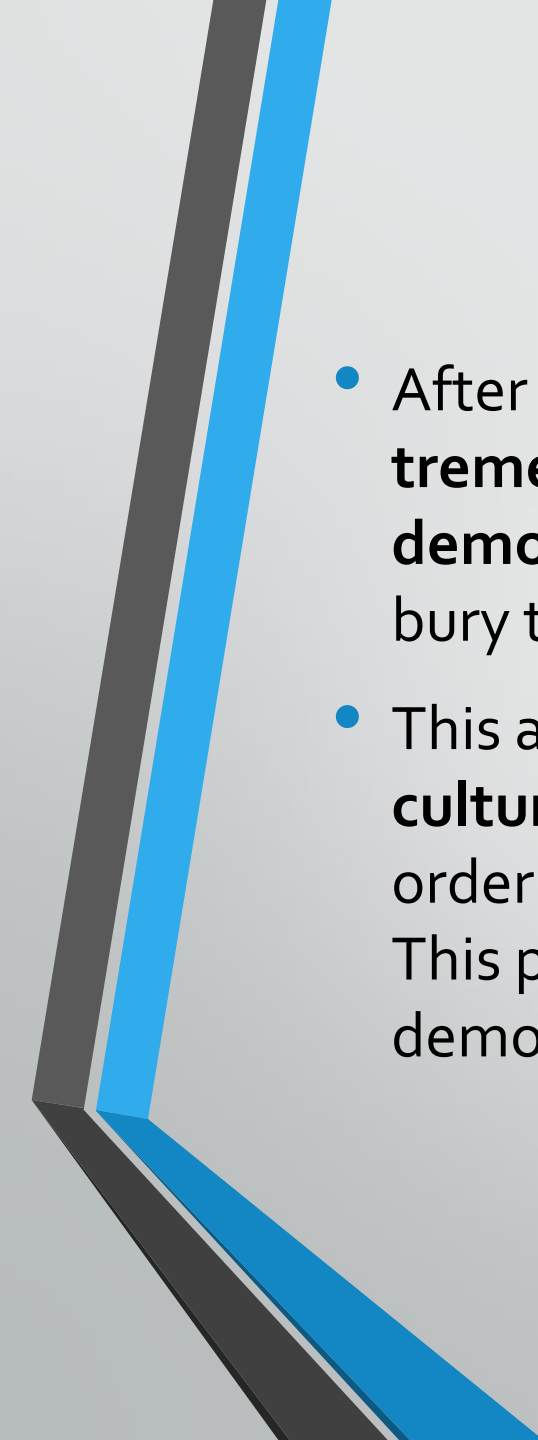




POLITICAL CULTURE AND LOCAL DEMOCRACY IN TUNISIA

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- After ten years, Kais Saied's audacious decision has provoked a **tremendous political upheaval that will either give Tunisia's budding democracy a second chance to grow or hand him a yellow card** that would bury this young democracy.
 - This article **argues the linkage between local democracy and political culture: it presents a theoretical and legal analysis of local** democracy in order to determine the mutations have been occurred in Tunisia since 2014. This paper explores the impacts of political culture as well on local democracy in Tunisia from the perspective of political science theory .

Political culture

To articulate the relationship between local democracy and political culture. Some variable conceptions must be clearly defined :

From **political science** point of view, **political culture**, is a set of shared points of view and normative judgments made by a population about its political system. Political culture conceptualized **roughly 60 years ago**, by Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba in 1963 when they published ***The Civic Culture***,

Then Sidney Verba and Lucian Pye's (1965) ***Political Culture and Political Development***. Gabriel Almond defines it: as *the particular pattern of orientations toward political actions in which every political system is embedded"*

Political culture

Based on political participation and the nature of people's attitudes toward politics.

They laid out three forms :

- ***Parochial political culture:*** Citizens are unaware of the central government and do not participate actively in government actions
- ***subject political culture:*** Citizens are aware of the central government and subjected to its decision . They perceive themselves as subjects of the government, not as participants in the political process (congruence ,obedience)
- **Participant political culture:** all citizens have the chance to participate. They are conscious of their rights and obligations
- Tunisia? : we are into **subject political culture**
- **How ? Political structure :**authoritarian and centralized
- **Characteristics:** it presupposes passivity, a difference or even a total submission to the political power

Tunisia's political culture toward local democracy

- According to this outline
- 2014 Constitution : a participant political culture
- 2022 Constitution: political culture has shifted to a hybrid political culture : parochial political culture and subject political culture.

	Culture paroissiale	Culture de sujétion	Culture de participation
Caractéristiques	L'identification politique se restreint à l'horizon local: on accorde peu ou pas d'intérêt à la vie politique nationale, éloignée, peu connue, voire illégitime.	Elle suppose la passivité, une déférence, voire une soumission totale à l'égard du pouvoir politique.	Les citoyens sont supposés actifs, compétents et critiques, il existe un degré important de compétition politique
Structure politique	Traditionnelle, décentralisée, relativement close.	Autoritaire, centralisée	Démocratique
Pays concernés	Mexique	Italie fasciste, Allemagne nazie	Grande Bretagne Etats -Unis

Définition

Philippe Braud définit la culture politique comme un « *ensemble de connaissances et de croyances permettant aux individus de donner sens à l'expérience routinière de leurs rapports aux gouvernants et aux groupes qui leur servent de références identitaires* ».

Il s'agit de l'ensemble des valeurs, normes et stratégies qui guident les attitudes politiques de l'individu. Il y a donc un lien entre la culture politique et la manière d'exercer et/ou contrebalancer le pouvoir. Les cultures politiques sont différentes d'un pays à l'autre.

Democracy Definition

The term **democracy**, which means "rule by the people," refers to a form of governance in which absolute power is delegated to the people. In his famous Gettysburg Address in 1863, U.S. President Abraham Lincoln may have most accurately defined democracy as "...government of the people, by the people, for the people..."

Local democracy, according to LMykola Bondar, is a self-governing form based on the unity of freedom and responsibility of the population at the place of residence of public authority, collective and individual rights of citizens to decide independently within the limits established by the Constitution and current legislation.

What is the impact of political culture on local democracy?

Impact through contested factors	Impact through the normative basis
<p data-bbox="647 644 1105 696">Sociopolitical impact</p> <ul data-bbox="377 772 996 943" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="377 772 996 818">- Elite and mass orientation:<li data-bbox="377 901 672 943">- A state role:	<p data-bbox="1768 644 2053 696">Legal impact</p> <ul data-bbox="1411 772 2379 943" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="1411 772 2379 882">- Decline in the constitutional choice of local democracy<li data-bbox="1411 901 2295 943">- A new vague model of local democracy

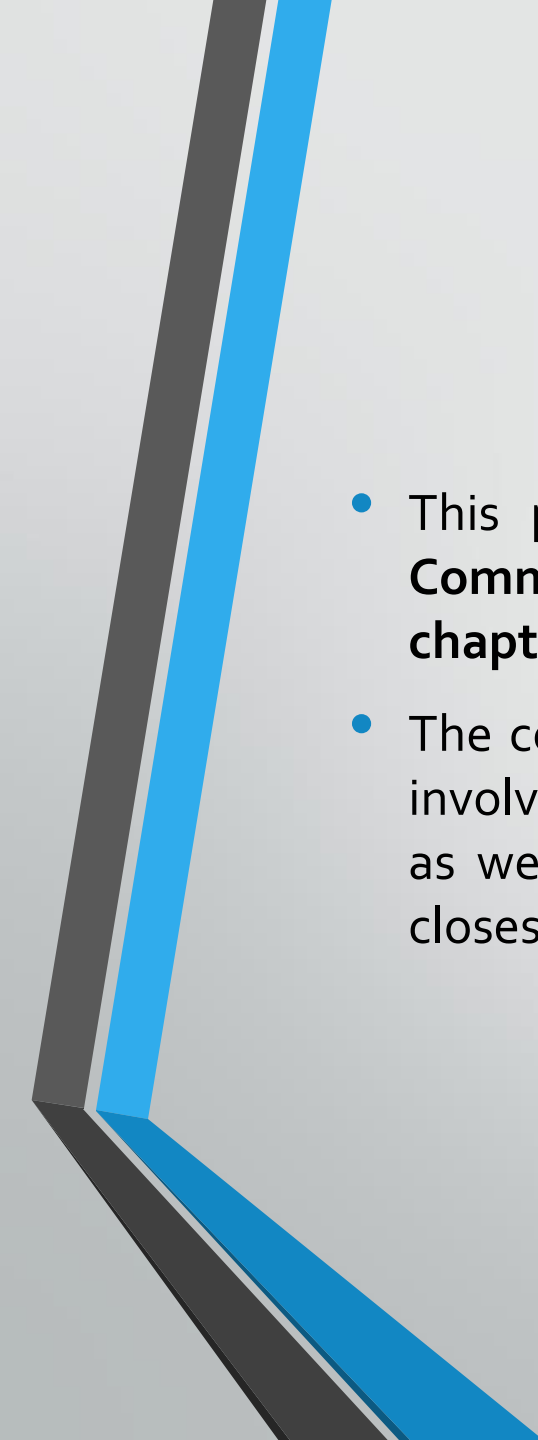
I: The impact of Political culture on local democracy : through Contested Factors

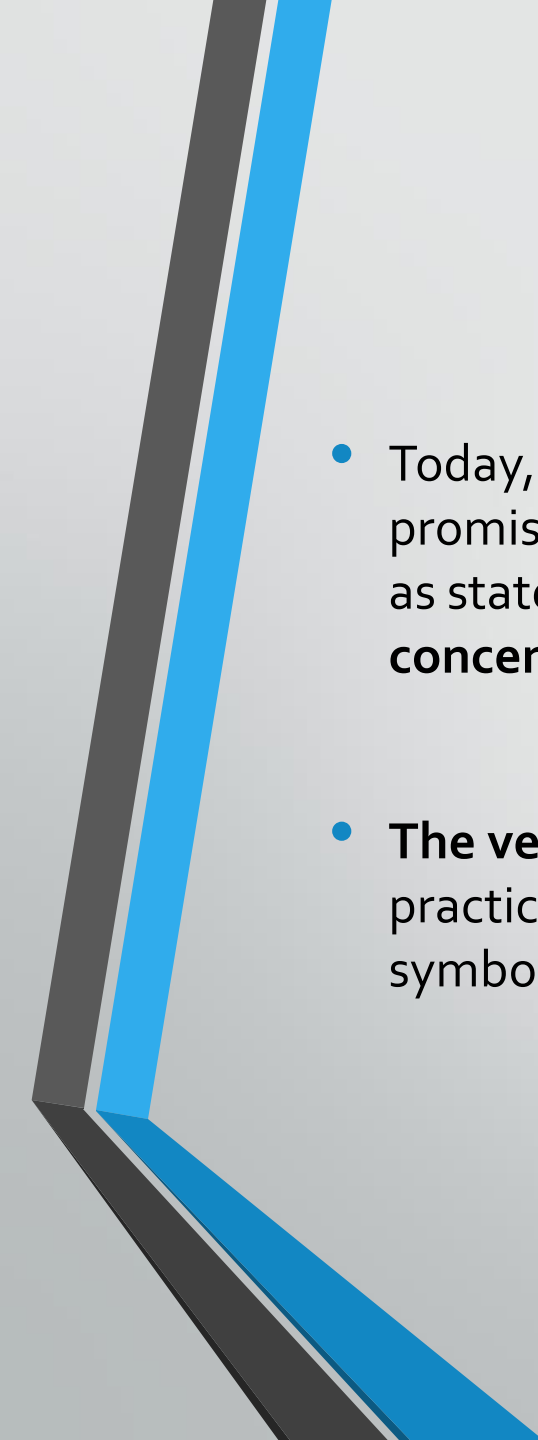
By soci-political implications, we mean factors influencing political culture to disdain (local democracy theory . Many flows have slowed **the road, the processes of decentralization** and the establishment of local democracy.

First, elite and average citizens attitudes toward local democracy are more connected with vertical political culture than horizontal political culture.

Second, creating local democracy in the Tunisia appears to be a state matter that requires its intervention to give the necessary resources to establish this democracy

- 1-The elite commitment to local democracy was a critical component of Tunisia's path toward democratization of local democracy. In 2011, the elite pledged unanimously to adopt local democracy first ,which was followed by the constitutionalisation of the renowned Chapter 7 in the Constitution of 2014, where both representative and participatory democracy had constitutional bases.

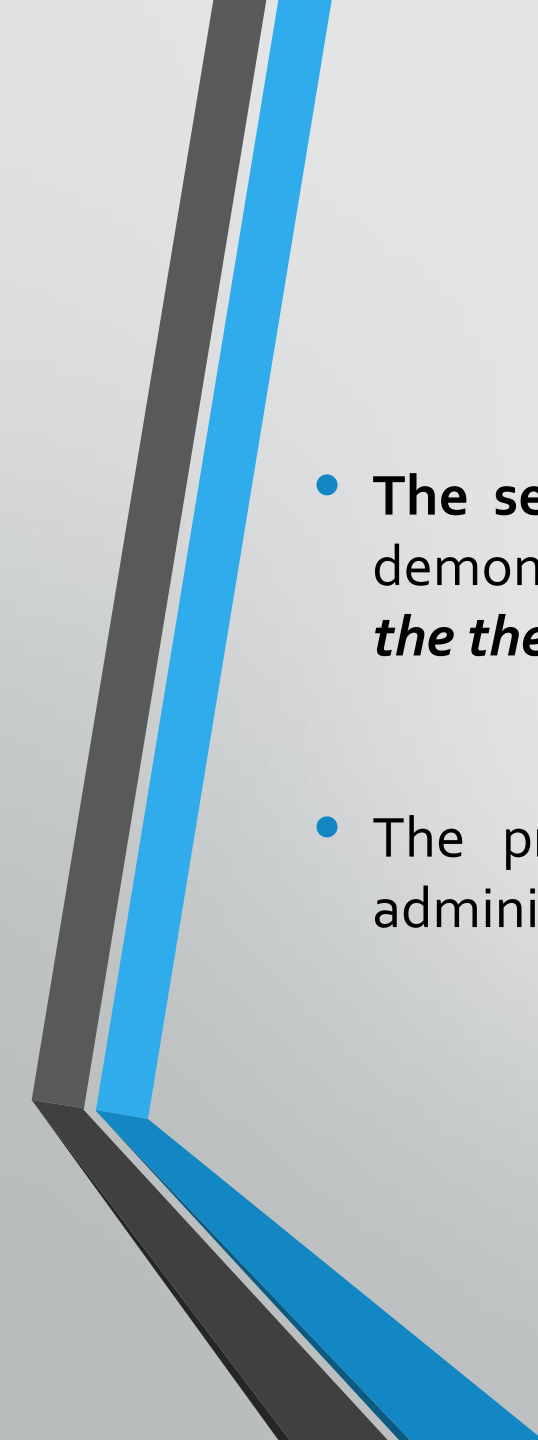
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- This political culture commitment can be proved through **the report of the Committee of Regional and Local Public Authorities who was charged to draft the chapter 7**
 - The constituent power of 2014 was convinced that an effective democratic transition involves:, a transfer of powers to the local level, the implementation of local democracy as well. Because the local level symbolizes the Tunisian revolution and present the closest administrative authority

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- Today, since 2021, Tunisia appears to be moving in **an unfavourable direction** (is no more promising direction (inauspicious), in terms of laying the groundwork for local democracy, as stated in the 2014 constitution. The vertical political culture matches with a **strong concentration and personalization of powers** within the executive centralization .
 - **The vertical political culture has** been quite widespread in Tunisia since 2021, restoring old practices in which, once elected, the state actor can replace those he represents and symbolizes, as well as govern without consulting them.



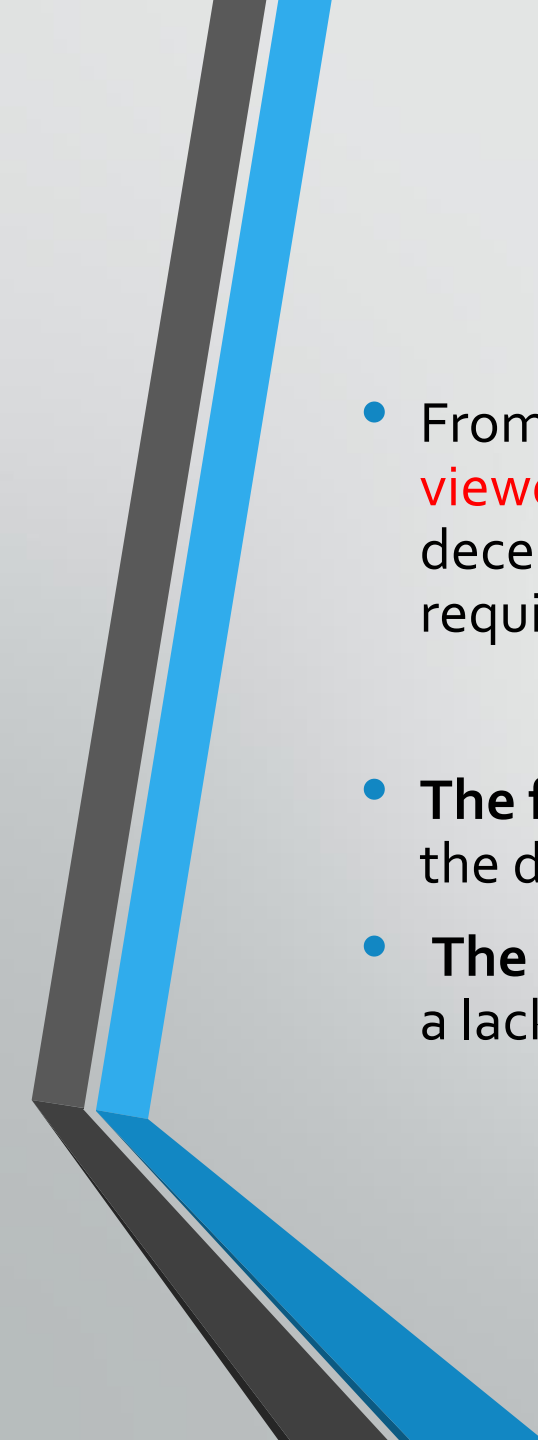
The revocation of local democracy is a result of a legacy issue:

- The political culture of Ben Ali regime and Bourguiba (under the Beylicate and the protectorate, also)regimes was viewed as a political ideology that favoured deconcentration rather than local democracy, in which the central government controls everything (the weakest form of decentralization) but, may only shift some responsibilities from those working in regions, provinces, and districts.

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- **The second element that** hampered local democratization progress in Tunisia and demonstrated the country's vertical political culture was ***the political elite rhetoric on the theory and practice of local government:***
 - The president Kais Saïd has showed no commitment to this system of local administration or the route of decentralization in his discourses and speeches.

- **Another example** :During the COVID crisis in 2020 : We saw also a decision was taken by central government affected the principal of freedom administration especially circular 25 March 2022
- **The circular prohibits mayors from taking** measures outside the framework of decisions announced by the government and forces them to review the supervisory. **The statement of Prime Minister** Elyes Fakhfakh when he appeared before Parliament to discuss the draft law on authorizing the government to issue decrees on March 26, 2020, also raised the reservations of the **Tunisian Confederation of Mayors** along with a number of mayors, as the Prime Minister called in his speech to unite efforts towards implementing the central decisions of respecting the curfew and adhering to the comprehensive quarantine. He added: *In times of crisis there is no decentralization, and in times of war there is no room for diligence. It is imperative to return to the centralization of decision-making.* ""

- Mass orientation; Citizens also continue to regard the central State **as sacred, underestimating local institutions and their expertise.**
- In Tunisia, among many people's actions, we have seen a vision that prevails the return of the vertical political culture, in which the central authority takes over executive power and legitimacy. .Therefore, **citizens tend to glorify central authority and not appreciate local institutions and capabilities .**
- The political culture of citizens towards local democracy can play a significant role to sustain democracy many studies have been demonstrating that stable democracy based into two things elite engagement and citizen behavior A political culture characterized by (1) **most citizens' acceptance of the authority** of the state, but also (2) a **general belief in participation in civic duty**

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- From another perspective, the issue of local democracy and decentralization **was viewed as a state affair**, and in order to concretize the process of either decentralization or activation of local democracy, the state intervention was required. We can explain this **by counting the number of reasons**:
 - **The first** reason that has undermined the process of democratization in Tunisia is the dilemma of precarity of financial resources.
 - **The second factor** for the lack of progress in democracy at the municipal level is a lack of professional expertise.

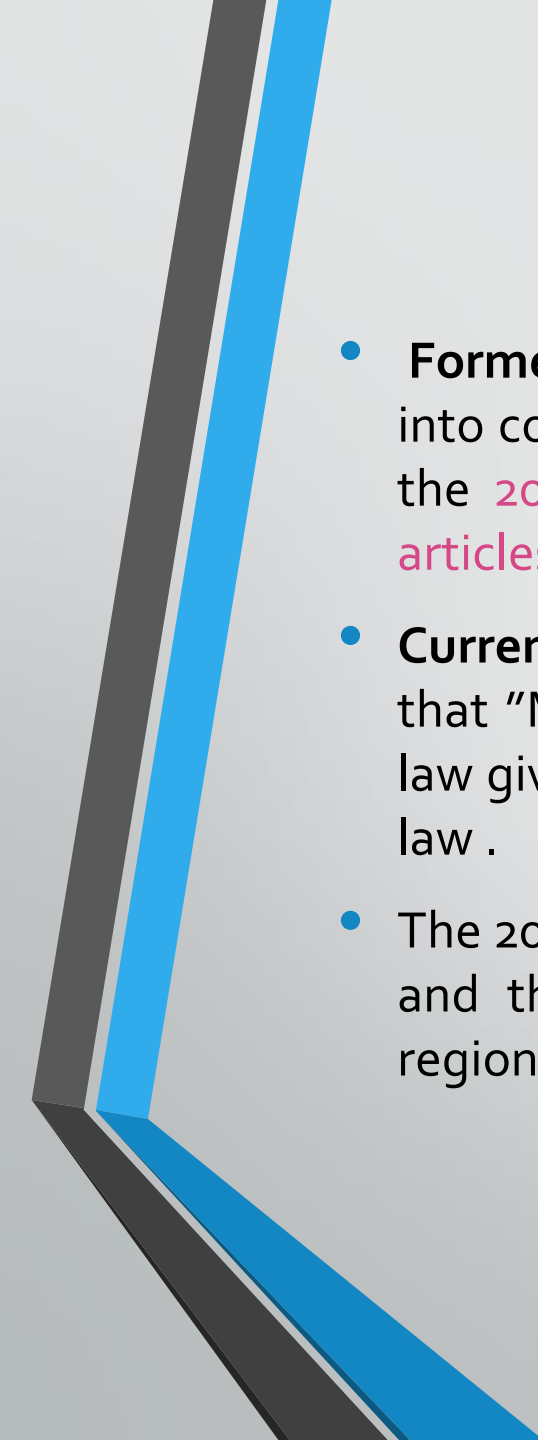
II-The impact of political culture on local democracy: through the legal impacts

- Today, regardless of the efforts that have been showing from some political actors in 2014 to establish a real decentralization and local democracy. The heavy central legacy persistence in administrative organization has produced a **vertical political culture orientation in which has been influencing the normative legal basis also**. Also, we have seen an ambivalent political culture towards local democracy:

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1 -A decline in the constitutional choice of local democracy :

- The creation of decentralization and open the door for local democracy have been seen as an emphasized element for citizen to have an active in decision making processes locally", in economic and social development ,good governance and the promotion of democratic values.
- **The correlation and the linkage between local democracy and political culture would genuinely lead to the triumph or the downfall of the democracy model through legal frameworks.** That's why we have perceived a hesitant towards the **constitutional content** of local democracy in the Tunisia constitutional history .

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- **Formerly** ,we had a very auspicious political culture towards local democracy translated into constitutional bases .it was viewed as the most significant step forward made under the 2014 Constitution: resumed in Chapter VII on “Local Government” contains of 12 articles (Articles 131-142) and 2 articles on General Principles chapter.
 - **Currently** , we have moved to one general article 134 in the 2022 constitution provides that “Municipal and regional councils, provincial councils and the structures to which the law gives the quality of local authority, manage local affairs according to the terms set by law .
 - The 2022 Tunisian Constitution restored back to the concise approach to local democracy and the question decentralization in 1959 constitution by mentioning the local and regional authorities

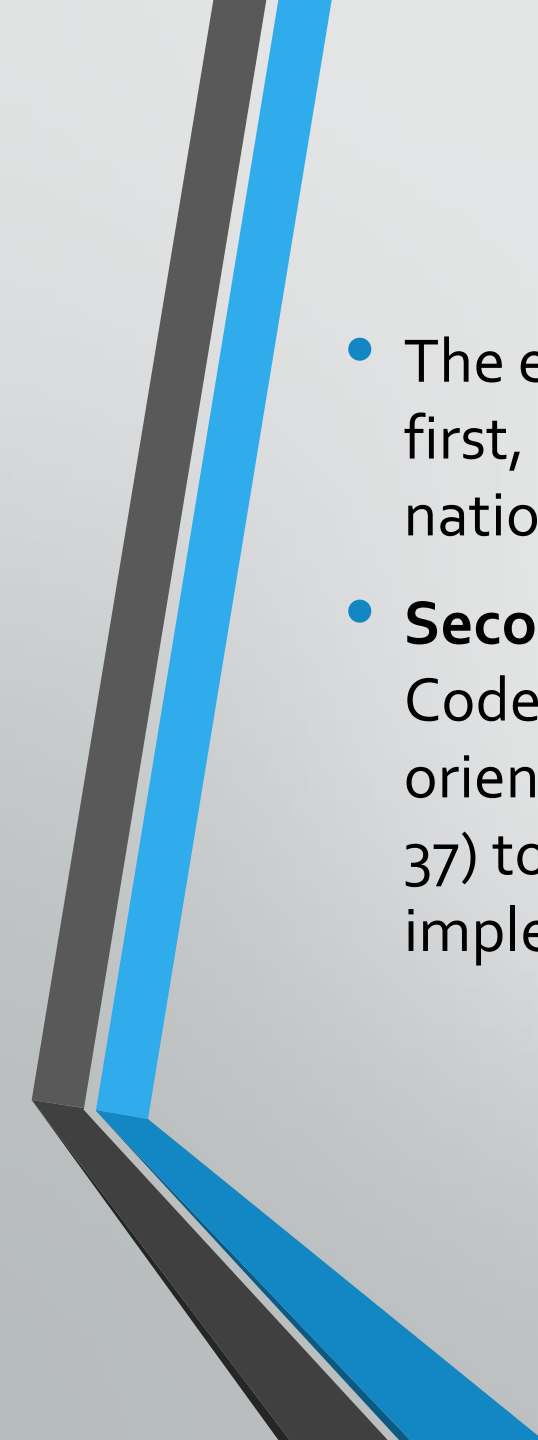
Consequences:

- **By stepping down this unprecedented constitutional framework** we prove not only that current political culture is not favourable to the decentralization path that's why it broke down the local government process. abundance of the process of participatory democracy

Denial of Participatory democracy has 2 major consequences :

***refers to the political outlook** : participatory democracy strengthens the political democracy, the exercise of political power and the legitimization of representative democracy. As a result, the process of re-legitimizing authority would be suspended, and existing deviations would be reproduced.

***refers to administrative outlook** , participation strengthens administrative democracy by bringing the administration closer to the citizen, making the most accessible way and to react to requests from citizens. As a result, the idea of renewing municipal policy through a participatory method was rejected.

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- The exceptional status of local democracy was highlighted in two ways: first, through **its constitutional validity** as a fundamental mode of all national, regional, and local public policy.
 - **Second through legislative status** particularly The Local Government Code 2018 in which still in effect, it translates the constitutional orientation of 2014 by dedicating an entire Chapter(chapter 5, from 29 to 37) to participatory democracy and identifies the instruments required to implement it.

2-A vague new model of local democracy :

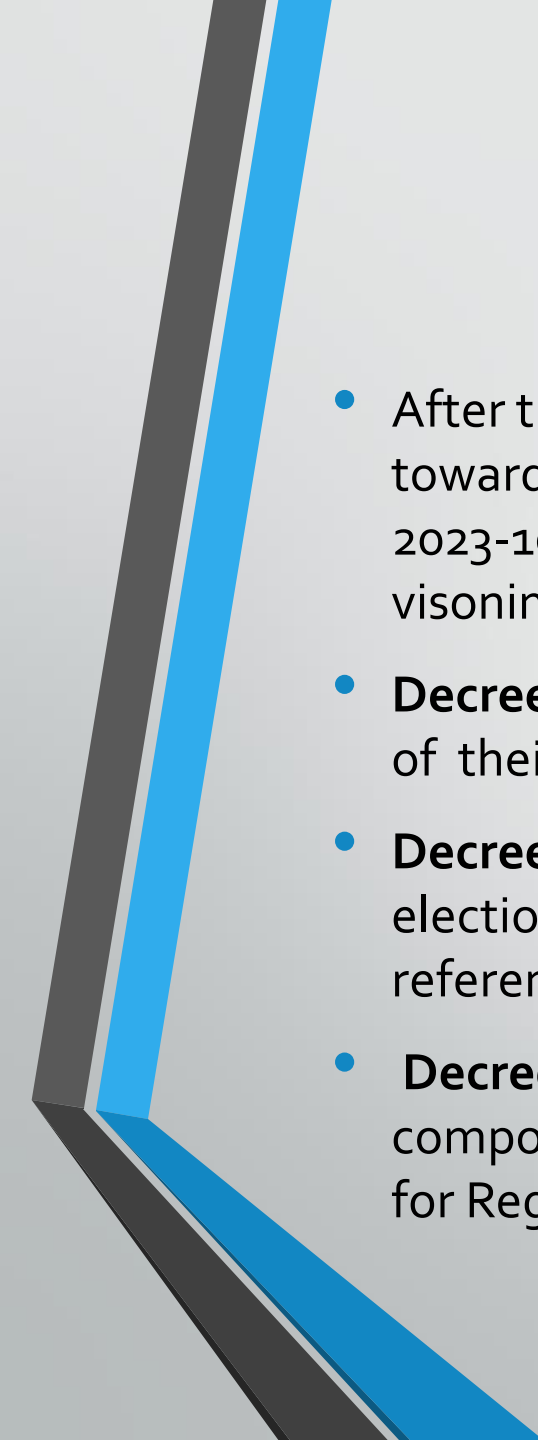
The new democratization movement of 2021 (political tendency of kais said) translate the new wave of democracy ,that *call for territorial equality among regions due to the disparity between the coast and the hinterland) and equality among citizens, the clientelism nepotism violence...*

- Model of democracy **aim to bring back the revolution goals and re-establish the matter of equality and sovereignty t to the frontline of the political agenda**, as we have mentioned and the first part raising just the people want since under 2014 constitution local officials has **failed to concretize the people's will of having ,a self-organization system at the municipal level when they can elect and participate in decision-making concerning local development without boundaries"**

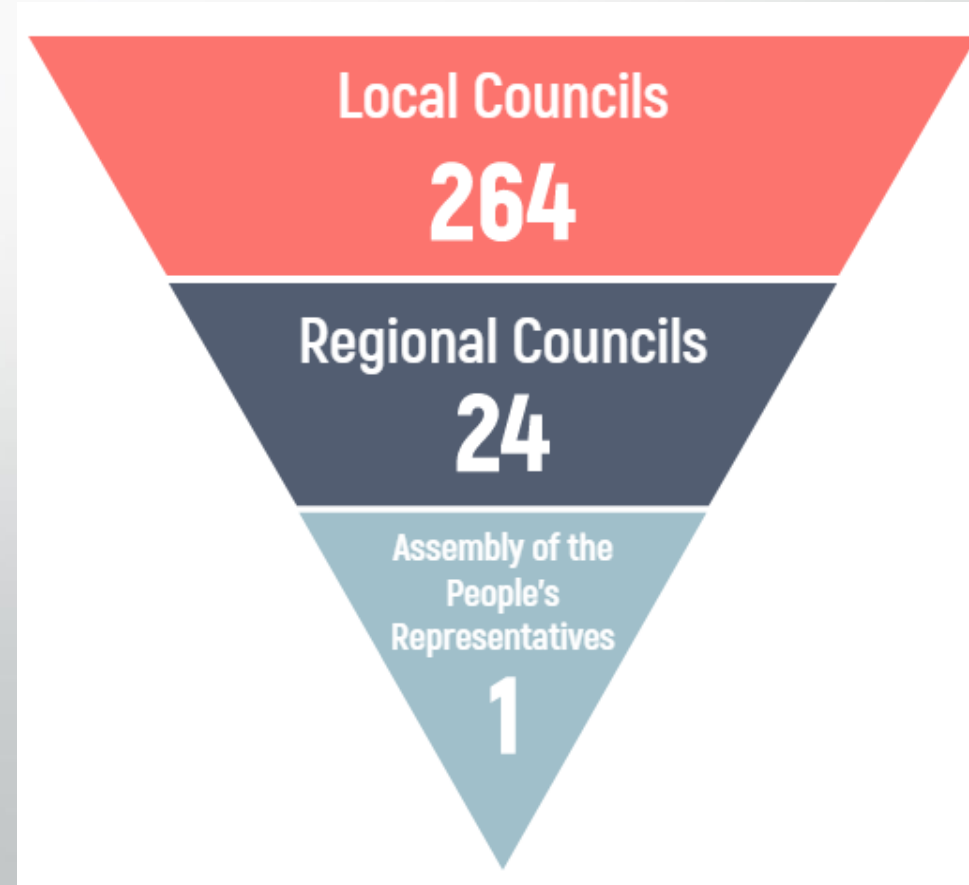


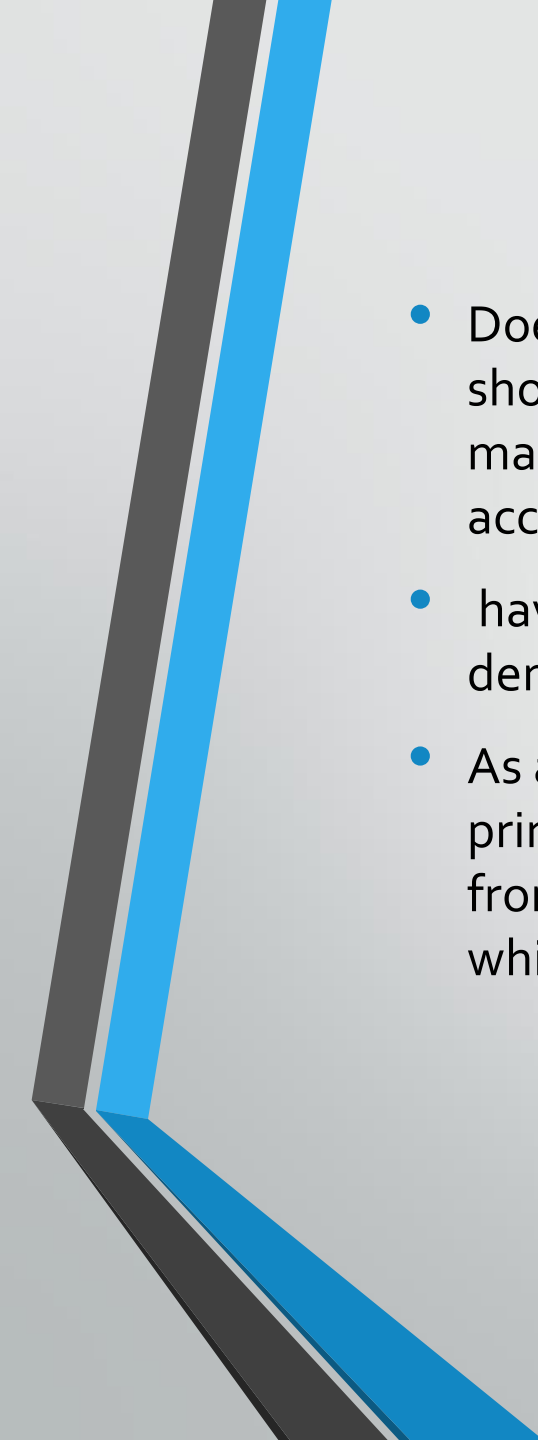
- **How ?**

- In the spring of 2011, Kaïs Saïed expressed his vision for the state and the organization of powers. He once again presented his plan in 2013 during the public debate on the drafting of the Constitution, in a text titled "for a new foundation ". He then included it in his electoral campaign during his candidacy in 2019.
- his vision is based on an alternative conception of how to exercise the democratic process: This theory is based on the principles of **direct democracy from the ground up, what he calls "bottom-up democracy building" or "the inverted pyramid". "bottom up construction . "re-constitution"**,
- which he has unilaterally imposed through a set decrees n° 2023-8 , dated 8 March 2023

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- After the 2022 constitution, the new perception(conception) of kaid said s political culture towards local democracy come into force through the set of degrees n° 2023-8 , 2023-9, 2023-10 dated 8 March 2023. The president has pushed ahead unilaterally the new visonimposed before the first session of Assembly people s representatives
 - **Decree n° -9 dated 8 March 2023** got dissolved municipal councils days before the end of their due term .
 - **Decree no. 8 changed the voting method and candidacy** requirements for municipal elections by amending the organic law n° 2014-16 dated 26 May 2014 on elections and referendum and its completion
 - **Decree n° 2023-10 dated 8 March 2023** regulating the elections of local councils and the composition of regional as the second parliamentary chamber – the “National Assembly for Regions and Provinces” – would emanate from them.

- **1-The architect of this construction can be summarized as follows:**
- **on the top level** are the 264 local councils , corresponding to the number of delegations in Tunisia, whose members are directly elected by the citizens of each sector (smallest administrative-territorial division), using vote on individuals .
- **Regional councils** , which correspond to the 24 governorates, are formed (derived)from these local councils, with one member representing each delegation within the governorate. Every three months, one representative from each local council is chosen by lottery.
- **The provincial councils**(whose territorial division has unidentified)also elect a member to the national council, to complete the composition of the second parliamentary chamber.
- **Finally** , with this architect ,the Parliament, or "**Assembly of the People's Representatives** ", is at the bottom of the pyramid, and its members come from the local councils.



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- Does this new model show a true democracy to remedy the political system's shortcoming since 2014, or does it reflect an autocratic system that undermines and marginalizes all counterpowers and elevates the president above any conceivable accountability? and thereby pave the way for a new dictatorship
 - have seen some forms of prospective democratic in order to correct representative democracy
 - As a result, the establishment of a national council regions would accomplish the principal goal of allowing people who have been entirely marginalized and excluded from decision-making to participate. Is it a scheme that sums up local development while ignoring local democracy?

- The audacious action made by Tunisia's president on July 25th is the most significant challenge to this fledgling democracy since the 2011 revolution.
- **An ambivalent political culture** has been proved towards the using of local democracy tools, every tool reveals a double edge sword, and it can have both positive and negative effects on local democracy.
- We can't tell if the current political culture is using this to develop democracy or to reestablish a new dictatorship that deviates from the rule of law; numerous factors explain this phenomena.
- Ambivalence refers to mixed or confliction attitudes, beliefs, and value towards political participation and the democratic process: we are going to **demonstrate a set of, mechanism:**
 - the draw,
 - The imperative mandate,
 - Constitutional referendum,
 - national dialogue

- The literature review revealed that Tunisian local authorities suffer from a number of shortcomings caused :
 - By **political culture attitudes** (vertical),
 - Human resource problems (a shortage of personnel),
 - **Political problems** (the presence of a single party),
 - Economic issue (lack of means...),
 - Development (lack of infrastructure),
- These issues are **both structural** (related to the state of local governments) and **conjectural** (related to the revolutionary setting, which has worsened local government failings).
- These factors collectively *contribute to the rejection and incomplete implementation of decentralization reforms in Tunisia.*

- After 11 years, Tunisia's local democracy reached a milestone with the acceptance of a new constitution through a referendum on July 25, 2022.
- This transformative process has highlighted the transient nature of participatory democracy and the challenge of rebuilding citizens' trust in democratic life.
- Participatory democracy is seen as a viable strategy to counter the rise of populist movements and prevent issues such ***as excessive central power, unilateralism, power consolidation, and bureaucracy.***
- However, implementing genuine participation requires collaboration **among various actors** including **elected officials, administration, experts, civil society, citizens, and the media.**
- The success of President Saied's bold actions in this regard **remains to be seen**, as it could either be a reckless move or a well-planned endeavor with the coming weeks shedding light on the path chosen.

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