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Sustainability Transition in the Moroccan Agrarian Regime: Transformative Learning and the Coalition of Discourses

Anasse BOUNAGA[1]✉ and Dr. Souad EDDOUADA[2]
[1]*Ibn Tofail University, Kenitra, Morocco*
[2]*Ibn Tofail University, Kenitra, Morocco*
Corresponding Author: **Anasse BOUNAGA**, **E-mail**: anasse.bounaga@gmail.com

| ABSTRACT

Soulaliyine Social Movement in Morocco, as any social movement, could function as a means of social change. This social change happens as a result of empowering oppressed people. Empowerment, contesting hegemony, social change mechanisms, and social movement dynamics are the focal points of the majority of the existing studies. This study takes a different direction, using in-depth interviews with two activists and based on their real life and pedagogical experiences. it aims to establish how social tension over collective land led activists to adjust their thinking and actions as well as shed light on how notions of sustainability penetrated their discourse. By using Mezirow's Transformative Learning theory as a lens for analysis, the examination of activists' experiences and narratives showed that activists' perceptions and frames of references changed as a result of participating in Soulaliyine Social Movement, and this change in their personalities is irreversible. This study also shows that openness to sustainability discourse helped those activists legitimize their demands.

| KEYWORDS

Soulaliyine Social Movement, Morocco, Activism, Transformative Learning, Sustainability Transitions.

Introduction

Morocco, like many other countries around the globe, is abiding by implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Those global goals, or what is colloquially referred to as Agenda 2030, were engineered by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 after a historical international agreement between 193 countries. Unlike its ancestor Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) targeted only at developing countries, SDGs represent a universally viable agenda for all countries to promote 'peace and prosperity'. To design a flagship roadmap that is consistent not only with the UN's universal goals of sustainability but also with the country's socioeconomic realities, priorities, and levels of development, Morocco followed a multisectoral approach to integrate the SDGs framework into its overall policy and sectoral development strategies. It has since deemed this framework to be one of the fundamentals of, inter alia, accelerating the transition to sustainable agriculture through encouraging agricultural investments (Adad et al, 2019), and eliminating all obstacles that prevent the effective management and 'exploitation' of land (Montanari & Bergh, 2019) through a large-scale operation of land acquisition (Berriane, 2017) called 'Melkisation'. This operation targeted the commodification and privatization of collective lands that constitute one of the largest land reserves in Morocco.

Collective land is an old form of property in Morocco. It is defined by the first article of the dahir of April 27, 1919 as being the lands of cultivation or rangelands that ethnic tribes, fractions of tribes, or douars (groups of dwellings) use collectively as a concession. This dahir was used by the French colonizers as a means to destroy tribal cohesion and acquire more lands. Its vagueness enabled the colonizer to establish its rule and tighten its grip on the tribes that disputed its authority by notifying

them that collective lands that are considered the pillar of life and the basis of their financial independence are in fact the property of the state and there is no room to protect it or struggle over it. Soulaliyine (ethnic Man), here referring to right-holders, who live on this collectively held land and historically stewarded it based on kinship relationships, cannot enjoy revenues from this land except under the tutelage of the Ministry of the Interior. No decision can be taken without the approval of the Guardian Council, which consists of representatives of the Ministry of the Interior, Agriculture and the administration in charge of water and forests. And as a red herring, the dahir required the Soulaliyine to choose tribal deputies to represent each tribe. These deputies form what is known as the Assembly of Representatives or the group of deputies to represent right-holders before the local authorities.

Collective Lands, Neoliberalism and Development Agenda.

Thus, these lands are considered joint property of ethnic tribes who trace their origins back to common ancestors, and their right to land derives from this relationship. These lands are spread throughout Morocco, and are managed by Soulaliyine who share access and use of it. These lands constitute an important real estate asset, as their area is approximately 15 million hectares, or one-third of the area suitable for cultivation and grazing in Morocco. There are more than 4,631 rural communities that steward their lands based on kinship relationships, and are distributed over 48 provinces. The number of Soulaliyine is nearly 9 million people, which represents one-third of the Moroccan Population. As mentioned before, Morocco is implementing an agrarian transition to overcome the economic and development stagnation caused by the vagueness of legal texts that govern these lands by following the SDGs. These goals, according to Stephen McCloskey (2019) who is an activist and works in the international development sector, 'are fatally hitched to the broken neoliberal paradigm of development which is resulting in wealth concentration in fewer hands and growing social polarisation.' (p.152). This, indeed, led Soulaliyine to stand up against breaches in implementing this transition, such as the illegal transfer of ownership title of collective lands to capitalists and ruling elites. In fact, this transition revealed many other problems such as the exclusion of tribal women or ethnic women – also known as Soulaliyate – from their rights to land because of customary laws and exclusionary colonial legacies (see Saadi, 2019), and contemporary issues related to what Soulaliyine call 'deficiencies in modern policy orientation' that led to the lack of surveying and marking off collective lands as well as obscurity in its administration (see Balgley & Rignall, 2021). All these problems have led to collective action to advocate for rights to collective land, or at least get compensated from capitalist tenants due to the increasing demand on this land from state and capitalists (ibid, p. 191).

Transformative Learning and Activism.

Adults face challenges in every domain of their day-to-day life, and learning has a dramatic and real impact on overcoming those challenges as well as stimulating self-transformation. Adults are pushed to learn in a continuous and transformative manner, to ultimately get a lucid and coherent understanding of their lived experiences to cope with the increasingly volatile and complex world. In this world, people aspire to be better and have emancipatory dreams and objectives, and social justice movements are incubators for people's dreams. These might be dreams of an untroubled world, or a just society. Oppression and marginalization are steady traits across this world, as are emancipation and resistance, and social movements have the potential to equip people with the necessary knowledge, strategies and power relations to fight for their dreams and achieve social justice. Meanwhile, learning is a primary component to achieve social justice from within a social movement (Hall & Clover, 2005). The perspectives and identities of social movement activists change naturally as a result of exposure to different life experiences, and Mezirow (1991) considers this change as a key element in what he termed Transformative Learning. Through ethnographic observations, Mezirow noticed that in times of struggle adults' attitudes, beliefs and values change as a result of a dramatic alteration in what they consider to be true or due to real-life problems that are related to social injustice or inequality (Christie et al, 2015).

Social movements and social justice activism are important sites of knowledge production and learning (Choudry, 2020). The kind of learning that is produced through participating in social movements challenge to what Brookfield (2000) called 'sedimented beliefs' or what Nelson Mandela referred to as 'tribal givens' that all adults share. In the context of this paper, I follow the line of thought of Justin Walton (2010) who has shown cognitive dissonance or tension stimulate aspects of learning. He recommended researchers use transformative learning as a framework to dig much deeper within the systems and dynamics of how tension mediates an active reconstruction of personal experiences.

'Soulaliyine' social movement is one of the social movements that has started in the Gharb region, a large agricultural area located in north-western Morocco, to defend the right to collective land of both women and men. Through listening to the stories of these social movement activists whom I contacted through the director of rural affairs in the city council of Ifrane, I have noticed a change in their actions and beliefs. This change lies in their adoption of a militant discourse that, not only, supports the right of all Soulaliyine, men and women, to benefit from their land-rights; and holds authorities accountable for the way they manage collective lands; but it also goes to some extent in line with the sustainable development agenda adopted by Morocco.

For a period of one year, from 2021 to 2022, I conducted five informal interviews with three female and two male activists of this land-right movement, which was started by ethnic women, Soulaliyate, claiming their rightful compensation from the sale or rent of collective land to private entities. After years of protesting and resisting 'the intersectional structural inequalities produced and reproduced by land privatization and by the alliance between the open-market economy and patriarchal political authoritarianism' (Eddouada, 2021), those women got their right to land.

In January 2022, the national commission of collective lands, the sole and legal representative of all Soulaliyine, chose the motto 'there is no choice but to align' for their annual conference, which is a clear indication to all land representative bodies – especially Nouab, or tribal representatives – that there is no alternative for Soulaliyine, men and women, but to unite their efforts to face what they call 'mafias' that threaten their right to land. Therefore, instead of expanding, this social movement turned inward to resolve internal problems and weaknesses. Through this process many prominent activists have emerged as leaders, and they have put their normal lives on hold to lend their voices to the movement. Therefore, the aim of this research paper is to analyse how social tension led members of this social movement to turn into activists, to shed light on what factors led them to adjust their thinking and actions, and invistigate how they adopted this militant discourse.

Transformative Learning in New Social Movements.

The term 'transformative learning' originated and is most often used in the scientific discipline of adult education. It refers to an irreversible and significant alteration in the way a person conceptualizes, experiences, and connects to the world (Mezirow, 1991). I shall here refer to the importance of adopting a praxis view of transformative learning, where praxis means reflection accompanied with action. This reflection-action process is meant to be liberating, empowering, and status quo challenging (Tomlinson-Clarke & Clarke, 2016). Transformative learning is often understood as an adult's awareness of social injustice which leads that person to become an 'enlightened adult' who alters her/his frames of references that consist of beliefs, values and assumptions to challenge the status quo and act differently through a process of reflection-action. In the same line of thought, my regard of transformative learning, as located within Soulaliyines' activism, is placed within the context of understanding transformative learning components derived from members' perspective shift that has led them to join the movement and act as activists and leaders. Thus, transformative learning is considered as activists' inclination to reason and adopt alternative solutions to land tenure problems through reconstructing how they perceive themselves and their positionality within Soualaliyines' social movement. This view is rooted in the arguments of Michael Welton (1993), who sees social movements as 'privileged sites' of transformative learning or emancipatory praxis, that goes in line with the Mazirow's original theory of transformative learning which argues that adults's learning is transformative in nature as they are able to detect deformities in their own socio-cultural assumpions and attitudes.

Sustainability Transition and Transformative Learning.

The sociocultural problems that ethnic women, Soulaliyate, experienced led them to start this social movement, which is now a social movement that includes not only women but everyone affected by the unfair distribution of land. This distribution is part of an ongoing relentless attempt by the Moroccan government to privatize collectively held land as part of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals agenda adopted by the state. The Moroccan government, through this agenda, is transforming its economy with the aim of realizing solid and sustainable growth on the basis of a transition to market liberalization, global market integration and privatization. The Moroccan government presumes that this land reform will help fostering the transition to sustainble agriculture.

Through this transition, re-engineering not only what is economic but also what is social, cultural and organizational is imperative. According to Ika Darnhofer (2014), an expert in rural sociology and rural development from university of Natural Resources and Life Sciences in Vienna, transitioning to sustainable agriculture requires structural, non-linear and systematic change in agricultural regime. Although there is no agreed upon definition of a regime (Holtz et al., 2008), in the context of this research I shall define an agricultural regime as a societal (sub)system within which transitions occur. This system consists of three interralated dominant elements: culture, structure, and practices. Culture, on one hand, consists of shared values, discourses and worldviews of the regime's main actors (e.g. officials, NGOs, activists). Structure, one the onther hand, comprises economic structures and institutions; while Practices are routines, behaviours, actions, and lifestyles (Grin et al., 2010). Therefore, an agricultural regime is the prevalent and mutual ways of thinking about farming and land, regulating the agricultural sector, and doing agriculture.

In the context of carrying out the agrarian reform, the Moroccan government, together with the support of Millennium Challenge Corporation – a United States foreign aid agency – has made several legal amendments to ensure the rights of all Soulaliyine, men and women, to foster the privatization process. It has also established several institutions and set up technological infrastructure to ensure the implementation of this national project for the modernization and development of agriculture, the promotion of good agricultural governance, the eradication of poverty, and ultimately the achievement of

national food security (Mcamorocco.ma). However, the emergence of sustainability transitions as a solution to recurrent agricultural problems produces new regimes and new problems (Grin et al., 2010). One of those problems, that this paper focuses on, is a problem that is reflected in the overlap between global development discourses and locally developed sustainability meanings or what Julie Cidell, an expert in urban sustainability and local government, calls 'Sustainble imaginary'. In her book 'Imagining Sustainability', she defines this concept as "a society's understanding and vision of how resources are being used and should be used to ensure socio-environmental reproduction." Moulay Ahmed Guenoun, one of the two interviewees, stated:

> They [capitalists] consider land as just a commodity, and we see in this land a blood connection to our ancestors who had lived here for centuries. They [capitalists] want to establish mega projects like the water company (Ain Ifrane) that has been established in Ibn al-Samim (his hometown). [...] We call on the government to speed up the process of authenticating the rights-holders lists and empowering them to benefit from land-compensation shares. Doing so will set them (rights holders) free from suffering, deprivation, exclusion and social marginalization that have affected them for decades, and ultimately contribute to sustainable human development that constitutes a locomotive for socio-economic development and benefits the stakeholders and the community in general.

This excerpt from an interview with Moulay Ahmed reveals a coalition between a neoliberal capitalist discourse of sustainability and a local view of sustainable development. Moulay Ahmed used expressions inspired by the global conception of sustainable development such as sustainable human development and the benefit that the stakeholders and community will gain from such reform. Such discourse coalition or dialogue between local imaginary of sustainability and global neoliberal capitalist discourses is present in an innumerable number of Soulaliyine's speeches, complaints, grievance letters, and media interviews. For instance, Rabia Assoul, the first female land representative in Morocco, wrote a grievance letter to King Mohammed VI against corrupt local authorities who excluded her from being a land representative. In this grievance letter, she called upon The King as the supreme leader of the Muslim people to help her to regain her right to represent the tribe that she belongs to. She also praised all the efforts made by the Moroccan state, under the high patronage of King Mohammed VI, to pave the way for sustainable development and empowerment of women and the marginalized through the efficient exploitation of collective lands as seen by the state.

These two examples, among many others, show that Soulaliyine activists chose to align themselves with his majesty king Mohammed VI and build an alternative discourse, opposite to the discourse of the first generation of tribal representatives that deprives women of their rights to land and stands in the way of any change in the customary tenure system. This alternative discourse combines local needs and global visions to challenge corrupt authorities, and real estate 'mafias', and ensure egalitarianism regarding land compensation. In this case, we are not dealing with ideological contestation or as Gramsci called it a 'war of position' that characterizes the process of conflict between proponents of sustainability and those who champion environmental discourses, a conflict that is dominated by the neoliberal bloc. However; We are, in fact, in front of what I prefer to call 'soft transformation'. A process through which activists alter their perceptions of sustainable development and create an alternative discourse that neither contradicts the essence of global sustainable development agendas nor addresses the 'real' problems of sustainability. In simple words, it is a discourse that leverages the power of neoliberal discourses to give legitimacy to and support their claim of their right to benefit from financial compensation for the sale or rent of their land.

Any sustainability transition, along with being a driver for economic sustainability, is also seen as a quest for a new value system that is in tune with sustainable development (Grin et al., 2010), a quest that triggers resistance (Scandrett, 2012), in which transformative learning and leadership play an important role in shifting towards that new value system and a sustainable economic system (Bryant, 2021). In this vein, the sustainability transition from communal to private property awakened the resistance of Soulaliyine activists against capitalist powers, this resistance through a process of learning and self-transformation pushed those activists to change their views and perceptions. Paulo Freire (1970), in his influential book Pedagogy of the Oppressed, stated that "men and women develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality but as a reality in the process of transformation." Oppressed people, like Soulaliyine, build and try to change their reality from the circumstances that constitute their daily events, in which sustainable development discourse is an integral part. To change their reality, they need to change their perceptions. Those perceptions, or ways of seeing the world, are organized into frames of reference, and transformative learning theory can be seen as the lens through which we can understand those adaptive changes and how the neoliberal discourse of sustainability came into dialogue with local meanings of sustainability and at which stage of personal transformation this dialogue took place (Walton, 2010). Therefore, the analysis will focus on the culture and practices aspects of the agrarian regime, but from the perspective of Soulaliyine activists as the majority of sustainability transition studies focus only on a subset of actors who influence transitions. Those studies generally account for the perspectives of state agents, CEOs, and scientists, consequently distancing the perspectives of other relevant actors such as activists (Lawhon & Murphy, 2011), thus

the voice and agency of those who are directly involved or influenced by transitions toward sustainability are neglected (Voss et al., 2009).

Transformative learning theory presents a ten-phase transformative process grouped into four stages that an individual must go through to some degree so as to claim transformative learning. According to Mezirow (1991) transformation starts when a person encounters a (1) disorienting dilemma, which is caused by a major life transition or life problem. This phase is considered as an "activating event" (Keen & Woods, 2016). This disorienting dilemma or activating event serves as a stimulus for learning. According to (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22), following this crisis or event, this person may encounter other phases and stages that are presented in the following analysis.

It is important to mention here that transformative learning phases are not meant to be linear and the process of transformation may differ from one person to another based on the preferences, personality, and learning style of that person (Cranton, 2006). In this paper, using the case-study approach, the narratives of two activists are seen as the primary source for examining how they engage in critical reflection and how they position themselves in the process of activism, and at which stage discourse coalition took place. I conducted in-depth interviews with Moulay Ahmed Guenoun, the chairman of the national commission of collective lands, and Milouda Chrit, a female former military aviation technician and social activist. Each interview session lasted for almost one hour. Those interviews focused on the transformative elements and stages derived from Mezirow's theory of transformative learning to understand how transformation in their perspectives took place and how the discourse coalition happened.

Experience and Self-reflection: Envisioning a New Self.

A discussion of transformational learning in the context of Soulaliyine social movement would be incomplete without a reference; first, to incongruous and incomplete legal frameworks that have until recently served as reference texts governing the relationship between ethnic communities and state regulatory bodies in land matters. These legal frameworks, namely the dahir of April 1919 that confiscated the property right to the community and granted it to the State, caused social unrest as tribal women were deprived of the right of land access and compensation. Second, to the conflicts within and between tribes, that result from corrupt land representatives or state authorities, and the conflicts between tribes and what Moulay Ahmed Genoun called grazing and real estate mafias. Gender-discrimination (John 2016, Laros 2017) and social problems (Gregorčič, 2019) may be seen as examples of crisis circumstances, that Mezirow (2000) considers as potential disorienting dilemmas which bring about and expedite critical reflection and then lead to perspective transformation which the individual acts upon.

The Case of Moulay Ahmed Guennoun

Moulay Ahmed Genoun is a retired professor of agriculture, syndicalistic and the chairman of the National Commission for Ethnic Communities. In his interview, he stated that inter-tribal conflicts between Ibn al-Samim, the tribe to which he belongs, and Taleb Aqqa tribe led him to think he ought to do something to help members of his tribe get back their rights to land. During conflict over a massive land theft, he was left with a serious head injury after a terrifying unprovoked assault by members of Taleb Aqqa tribe in Ramadan 2000, while he was trying to redraw land borders between the two tribes **(Disorienting dilemma)**.

When he came back home from Lfkih ben saleh, where he used to work as an agricultural technician, people started saying "the son of the tribe is back, indeed he came down to us from heaven". They were amazed at how he deals with administrative issues, and how authorities respond quickly to his inquiries and letters. He was encouraged by members of his tribe to run for election; he got elected as a tribal and regional counsellor, but even though he was the tribal counsellor his opponents (tribal representatives of Taleb Aqqa) prevented him from attending Nouab meetings without having the 'legal status' – being a Naib – to speak or act on behalf of his tribe. This was too much for him to contain. Moulay Ahmed started to feel anger grow within himself and he felt disappointed as he worked day and night collecting documents, participating in protests, hosting several crucial meetings at his house and speaking on behalf of his tribe with the media. At this point, he started reflecting on what was wrong with the way he tried to resolve those inter-tribal conflicts. The shift in his beliefs was substantial as, before his coming back home, he used to believe that land is for everyone and there is no room for words like 'right holders', he used to be a left-wing supporter and used to see every aspect of life from the lens of left-wing principles. "I used to say how the government can be a guardian over us when criticising the 'Guardianship Clause', are we children?". This clause gives the state the upper hand to supervise the rights-holders lists and resolve conflicts related to land distribution, but after a period of time he realized that his view was wrong, and he is no longer an opponent for the sake of opposition **(Self-examination with feelings of anger)**.

His left-wing political background and affiliation with the workers union in Beni mellal region, where he used to work as an agricultural technician, made him a radical who believes in achieving progress for the benefit of all Moroccan people and equipped him with the necessary skills to defend others' rights. "My affiliation with the left party and my opposition from within it made me embrace the idea of good for all" he said, but the Ramadan event made him believe that even his good background in activism cannot help him claim the rights of his tribe back unless he has a legal status. He soon realized that defending his

tribe's right to land would only be possible if he joins the institution of Nouab – the community of tribal representatives. At first, he did not want to join the tribal assembly, but upon reflection, he decided to represent his tribe as a Naib and started believing that those people – referring to members of his tribe – are also humans who need help and instead of embracing the idea of helping all Moroccans, he started feeling the need to work for the benefit of his tribe. His great attachment to land and his old home revived his sense of responsibility towards his ethnic community and shifted his universal perspective on activism to a local and more flexible one **(A critical assessment of assumptions)**. This experience instilled in him the willingness to forget about elections, to dedicate his time to Soulaliyine's issues all over Morocco, and to start a national commission of collective lands.

After 2010, Moulay Ahmed and other Soulaliyine from different regions of Morocco, who have the same vision and convictions, decided that there was an urgent need to start a national commission of collective lands, especially with the government's adoption of a vision that depends on collective lands as a lever for development. On a local level, he tried to change the people's mentality to bypass the concept of 'jmaa' tribe and adopt the concept of 'jamaaia' association and that feelings of selfishness and unilateralism must be overcome and all of them should work towards protecting land and making it a sustainable resource for future generations. On a national level, there was a major and multifaceted effort from Nouab from different regions to advance their cause. During the first meetings, they have discussed how their experiences differ from one another to have a common basis upon which they can build their collective vision. According to Moulay Ahmed what was really remarkable and distinct was the fact that Nouab, each from their own local contexts, came with a promising and achievable project that could contribute to a radical transformation of the productivity of the collective lands, and even a transformation in the direction of making it an economic lever and giving it a human dimension in the service of people and the nation (**The process of transformation is shared**).

In the midst of his experience as a Naib, Moulay Ahmed has created a lot of relationships with many local, national, and international NGOs such as Oxfam Canada and ADFM two prominent organizations with the mission of promoting equality and the equal dignity of men and women. The roles he played were crucial to regaining the right to land. He worked hard on building inter-movement solidarity, helping people understand new laws and regulations, collecting documents, writing reports, organizing regional and national meetings with authorities and other soulaliyine and speaking on behalf of the latter in the parliament and in front of the media **(Exploration of new roles, relationships and actions)**. To do all these tasks, Moulay Ahmed explored and tried to understand changes in his behavior, he actively worked to understand, experience, and build self-confidence in these new roles and relationships by working on improving some skills such as leadership, boldness, rhetoric, listening, deduction, coordination and writing skills. He was keen on getting constructive feedback, and the first source of this feedback was his nuclear family and friends. He stated that all members of his tribe felt that change in his behavior and started asking him questions like where he has learned all this **(Planning a Course of Action and Building Confidence)**. He never missed an opportunity to attend workshops organized by national and international NGOs. "In fact, I attended many training courses on communication, and wrote many articles on issues related to Soulaliyine. I learned a lot from the meetings that I used to go to in all regions of the Kingdom, they were an opportunity for me to apply everything I had learned." he said. **(Acquiring Knowledge and Trying New Roles)**. He feels that he is a new person now; he is no longer a left-wing radical. He also said that his initial objective behind entering politics was to work on his own agenda and reach the parliament, but after this experience everything has changed as he now prefers to be that simple person who defends people's rights and clings to the earth **(Reintegration).**

The Case of Millouda Chrit

Millouda is a former military aviation technician who experienced gender-discrimination in land tenure. Like all women working in the military service, Mi Millouda was excluded from compensation of Guich lands – the army's land. Those lands were historically considered Sultani's lands before the introduction of the 1919 law on collective lands, which redefined them as collective lands. She stated that all male military members benefited from land compensation, but she was denied this right because she is a woman. "The nature of my work was very difficult, I entered this male-dominated field of work at a young age, I spent all my time at work dirty with aviation engine lubricants working on aircraft parts, but all this did not intercede for me when I demanded my right to land" she said. She was very shocked and felt discriminated and humiliated when her application was rejected because of being a woman, she could not get her right to land even if she had a military rank higher than her male counterparts **(Disorienting dilemma)**. This problem made her raise several questions about 'the woman' as a concept. Through her interaction with several supporting and opposing parties, she started forming a different conception of her role as a woman. Every meeting she had with members of civil society who support the cause of Soulaliyates – tribal women – and any troubles she had with the authorities led her to gradually and unconsciously question the sociocultural meanings ascribed to female roles. This counter and divisive criticism shook her assumptions about the women's rightful realm, and made her wonder that the role of women in society is not limited to household and prestigious careers **(Self-examination with feelings of anger)**.

In 2006, Nezha Alaoui, a lawyer from Kenitra region working on issues related to gender discrimination and violence against women, guided Mi Millouda and other women through the process of claiming their rights. She helped them in writing detailed

complaints and presenting them in front of a specialized committee consisting of judges, lawyers, human right activists and tribal representatives, Mi Millouda's intervention was broadcast on TV on the occasion of women's day. She was chosen to present women's complaints in front of this committee, but unfortunately some male lawyers – she described them as 'lgheraqa', trappers – asked her trap-questions and called her out on them. Members of ADFM, an independent feminist Moroccan NGO, saw her intervention on TV and asked her to join them in the organization headquarters in Rabat. During her meeting with the ADFM members, Nezha Alaoui, and other right holder women, Mi Millouda criticised the gendered implications of rural land dispossession and demanded that male trusteeship be considered illegal. As a result of mutual interest and coalition with ADFM, she was invited to attend numerous consecutive meetings to define the meaning of Soulaliya – tribal woman. Mrs Rabia Naciri, the president of ADFM, throughout those meetings worked with them on defining 'Soulaliya'. She said "ADFM members were not familiar with the concept of 'tribal woman'. Mrs Rabia Naciri, the president of ADFM, throughtout those meetings has worked with us on defining the concept 'Soulaliya', and has shown us some strategies to go about claiming our rights. ADFM support fueled my strength to confront 'al-Qayid' – a representative of ministry of interior – but I was told that I am just a woman and I have no right to claim". At this point, the unequal treatment, highlighted in her mind the activist role of women in fighting for equality, especially as she was encouraged to do so by members of ADFM and other women right-holders **(A critical assessment of assumptions)**.

In coordination with ADFM, Mi Millouda and other tribal women started visiting neighboring tribes and provinces to work on the sensitization and mobilization of other women who were suffering from gender discrimination. She said "We found other women who were willing to join us, and others who were prevented by their husbands from attending the meetings we organized, but we were able at least to convey our ideas to them and make them aware that they have a land-right to defend." (**The process of transformation is shared**). Her house was open for all soulaliyates from all regions, as a meeting place where they exchange experiences, stories, ideas and study new laws and ministry circulars. After some of them were inaugurated as Naibat – the first female tribal representatives in Morocco – by Zineb El Adaoui the governor of the province of Kenitra, Mi Millouda started visiting women of her tribe to write down the formal lists of names of female right holders, and also to know all the lands under the guardianship of the tribe. Another major role she played was coordinating with other women of the same tribe to form an all-female representative body to lodge their complaints in front of local authorities so as to push formal constitutional reforms forward in favor of women's rights to land. She worked on strengthening the emerging advocacy coalition around women issues by building an effective bridge of communication between all Soulaliyates and other national and international human rights organizations as well as introducing their cause through TV and Radio interviews and organizing sit-ins in front of the parliament **(Exploration of new roles, relationships and actions)**. They became fully aware of who they will communicate with, in what way and the necessary documents they need to support their claims. She said "we know now that we need to hand the right-holders lists and complaints over to either 'al-Qayid', the guardianship council, the directorate of rural affairs or the ministry of the interior. We also became very familiar with how to fight for our rights." **(Planning a Course of Action).**

Because of the nature of her military work, she was prohibited from gathering in groups of more than three. She said "I felt isolated because of the limited interactions I had with other co-workers in my field of work. However, after my retirement and joining Soulaliyates social movement I felt like I was born again and took my first steps in learning". She learned a lot from other Soulaliyates' experiences and ADFM training courses. The organization taught them how to write complaints, where to find and how to analyse new laws, and gave them lessons in communication. At first, they did not know how to write a complaint and to whom they would give it, but through the practical lessons that they attended every Saturday at organization headquarters in Rabat, they learned how to communicate with the authorities, lawyers, human rights organizations and how to prepare for TV interviews. "I felt like I am in school again, we had notebooks and we wrote everything down. What I liked the most was the practical part of each workshop. To practice what we have learned, we acted like we were in a real situation in front of a local authority, and the mentors intervene whenever they feel that something should be corrected," she said. **(Acquiring knowledge and skills and trying out the new roles).**

Now, she is confident in her ability to stand before authorities and speak to the media. She said "I think I am now familiar with way more topics related to Soulaliyine issues than I used to be. I communicate effectively with all Soulaliyine of my tribe, especially marginalized women and men who are deprived of their rights because of having only daughters. I show them how to speak for themselves, and even help illiterate male nouabs. Only then, the authorities became more confident in us – i.e. female tribal representatives, thus causing me to become even more confident in myself." **(Trying the Course of Action and Building Confidence)**. "Praise be to God, I got my right to land and helped many women and men to get their rights as well. My work at the military service was like a struggle for homeland and every Moroccan, but now I am fighting for the empowerment of women and the strengthening of their presence in our society. I cannot imagine myself doing anything else but helping those women, and now I believe that every woman should fight for her rights." **(Reintegration).**

Transformative Learning and Social Change: Clarifying the Relationship.

Activists' Individual Experiences.

While learning at the most basic level is a matter for the individual, transformative learning ultimately has an impact on the community. The two previous cases confirmed Mezirow's (1998, 2002) findings and showed that transformative learning is fostered and established through critical reflection and rational discourse stages respectively. These two stages, especially rational discourse, reflect the activists' inclination to make decisions based on logic and rationality rather than on emotions. Disorienting dilemmas, in both cases, played the role of catalysts to transformative learning, but critical reflection acted as an awareness-building tool by providing both activists the opportunity to reflect on their past experiences and question their previously held assumptions through which they assimilate the 'subjective reality' and their 'frames of reference'. A frame of reference encompasses "the distinctive ways individuals interpret experience or stereotypes they have unintentionally learned regarding what it means to be a woman, [...] a patriot or a member of a particular racial group." (Mezirow, 1993). When the old frames of reference no longer apply to make sense of some sociocultural aspects or interpret significant experiences in activists' lives, they tended to create new meanings to guide their decision making and action, then the process of making meaning becomes learning. Both cases showed that interacting with other people either allies or opponents during the first phase of critical reflection phase, (i.e. self-examination), fostered transformative learning as they responded to alternative frames of reference by looking at their prior belief systems in different lights.

Self-examination phase, as a stimulator and driver of critical thinking, was initiated when new knowledge was internalized leading to a metacognitive sensitivity toward content knowledge, process knowledge, and premise knowledge to solve the imbalances and problems that are embedded in the sociocultural context surrounding activists. Content knowledge is often knowledge about laws regulating collective land and systems of power and exploitation developed by Soulaliyine themselves and the state. While, process knowledge is about the necessary skills and strategies that activists have developed while struggling for their rights; particularly, while participating in writing detailed complaints, participating in workshops and local, regional and national meetings and conferences, as well as organizing protests, and attending radio interviews. Premise knowledge is about how activists frame socio-cultural imbalances and problems as well as their intended outcomes and goals. Thus, their cognition incites an internal dialogue at a metacognitive level, which in turn sparks critical reflection which is necessary to assimilate content, process and premise knowledge to fully understand the different epistemological dimensions of the socio-cultural context and solve problems in a strategic way. According to (Fleming & Lau, 2014) building self-confidence in one's skills and knowledge is a direct indicator of high metacognitive sensitivity.

Thinking critically about their experiences as activists and the knowledge that they assimilated during the self-examination phase led them to deeply and critically assess their prior assumptions. From this perspective; however, based on the findings of this research, I argue that both phases self-examination and critical assessment of assumptions happened simultaneously and continuously, and not in a linear way. As a result, critical reflection phase enabled both activists to correct 'distortions' in the assumptions on which their prior frames of reference have been built as well as errors in their problem solving abilities. Therefore, all that they have learned is the result of accommodating themselves to new situations, altering their decision making strategies, and ultimately making efforts to solve problems that they have encountered.

Inline with changing their prior frames of reference, critical reflection stage helped activists move from the simple assessment of how and why they have felt, perceived or acted to consider possibilities of how best they can go about changing their surrounding and social context. According to King and Kitchener (1994) both activists have reached the highest level of critical reflection in which they applied criticism and reevaluation to the self, others and their own solutions. They have showed two types of learning instrumental and communicative learning by emerging themselves in task-oriented problem solving which is supported by critical reflection. The instrumental learning is about taking control of the external environment, which means, in this context, finding a way to gain their rights to land through making optimum use of all the available resources, relations, capabilities and skills. Communicative learning, on the other hand, refers to the way they communicate with and understand other activists and the way they express their feelings and emotions about the specific cultural or social aspects surrounding land tenure. Thus, the findings of this paper echoed Mezirow's (2003) findings and showed that these two types of learning played a major role in the transformative learning of both activists.

Activists' Social Context.

Transformative learning experiences that are tightly connected to the cultural context and fostered by critical reflection enhance and intensify socio-cultural awareness and knowledge of one's self and others as well as alter and challenge culturally distorted and biased assumptions (Tomlinson-Clarke & Clarke, 2016). Activists, through the rational discourse stage specifically recognition of shared experiences phase, developed a sense of affiliation with other right holders who share similar assumptions and goals. This shift from the individual to the social dimension of transformative learning necessitates a reconfiguration of the latter theory to go beyond the cognitive and rational approach adopted by Mezirow to integrate social dimensions (Fleming, 2014), through

privileging the relational, communicative and collective elements of the social movement (Choudry, 2013), by adopting aspects from the intersubjectivity theory to allow reframing transformative learning theory in a way that encompasses 'affective sharing' about the movement and among its members; thus, considers rational discourse stage as an interpersonal process of understanding the self and relating to others that builds self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem (Fleming, 2016).

Intersubjectivity, in the context of adult learning, is the type of learning that emphasizes relationships with other members of the community through a process of striving to know the self and the other (Yorks and Kasl, 2002). Again, metacognition plays a substantial role in connecting activists with other members of the social movement. It is used to regulate and monitor their own cognitive processes as well as develop their own 'mentalizing ability', which means the ability to perceive and interpret one's own and other's intentions, feelings and behavior (Frith, 2012). When metacognition is applied to other members of the social movement; on one hand, it helps activists in reflecting on and justifying their behavior to other members. On the other hand, it enables activists to consider the intentions, feelings and knowledge of other members, and as a result embrace what Frith (2012) calls a 'we-mode' that reinforces collective action.

The adoption of the 'we-mode', which is facilitated by metacognition helps activists to take leading roles and try new ones as they receive positive reinforcement from allies and/or members of the social movement. This positive reinforcemen enhances their self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem and pushes them to set shared goals and learn necessary skills to solidify their new roles and confirm their new 'frames of reference' that become more inclusive in the sense that they take in global values such as justice, equality and ecological sustainability, as this is the ultimate goal of transformative learning (Morrison, 2015).

Discourse Coalition, Learning and Sustainability Transition.

Throughout their activism journey, both activists developed a progressive discourse that goes beyond their previous assumptions and values to include some universal views on sustainability. A discourse that produces social acts or discursive actions that at the same time represent and preserve the 'minimalist' interests of all Soulaliyine as well as support government's actions. Both activists adopted a discourse that enshrines the rights of all Soulaliyine to be integrated into the rights holders lists regardless of whether or not they are currently living in their ethnic community. By doing so, they bypassed the so-called residency clause, which deprives anyone who does not live in the geographical area of the tribe from her or his right to land. Moulay Ahmed Guenoun in a press interview explained:

> This national project is a royal project par excellence, and we [Activists and national commission members] are here to follow the implementation of new laws, especially the residency clause, to ensure the right of Soulaliyine to benefit from land. We are also here to sensitize those tribal representatives who serve their narrow interests at the expense of their brothers and sisters that we are now in a stage during which all narrow problems must be overcome in order to look into the future and work on the development of these lands.

> Millouda, in a brief media intervention to the online Facebook page of Soulaliyine, said that she was trying to collect all the signatures of right holders belonging to her tribe so as to maintain their rights and not to exclude any of them. She stated that her ultimate goal was to foster the implementation of the royal project, which aims to promote the sustainable development of collective lands.

This progressive discourse that aims to promote 'positive' social change , which represents in this case the interests of Soulaliyine through socio-political change and supports government's actions, originates from alignment with the dominant international discourse on sustainability and highlights local economic and social rights. Thus, this discourse did not emerge from a competition between local visions on sustainability and government's actions and discourses, but from a coalition between two discourses that differ in terms of power. According to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002, p.14), the power dimension of discourse creates our social world and influences the particular ways of being in and talking about this world; thus the utterances of activists reflect a belief system that was formed through a process of self-transformation to accept the prevailing dominant social and political goals and discourses. This overlap between the personal narratives and dominant discourses of sustainability took place at the rational discourse stage of transformative learning. Activists' open-minded and sane stance at this stage pushed them to understand that in order to fight for their rights, challenge corrupt authorities and tribal representatives, and legitimize their demands; they needed to adopt dominant discourses on sustainability and play the role of 'sustainability advocates'. Their advocacy bears no local sustainability imaginaries, but is centered around one 'minimalist' goal which is egalitarianism regarding land compensation.

Conclusion

Sustainability transitions lead not only to transformations in technological infrastructures, economic systems, and institutional structures, but also cause an alteration in the cultural dimension of the target regime (agrarian regime), which in turn affects the practices of the main actors of that regime. The transformative experiences of both activists helped in changing their viewpoints

and assumptions in a way that neither neglects the demands of Soulaliyine nor contradicts the national and global agenda on agrarian reform leading to the emergence of an alternative discourse that advocates sustainability and legitimizes the needs of all Soulaliyine.

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