The Fripe as Urban Economy: Market- and Space-Making in Tunis

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Thesis Abstract

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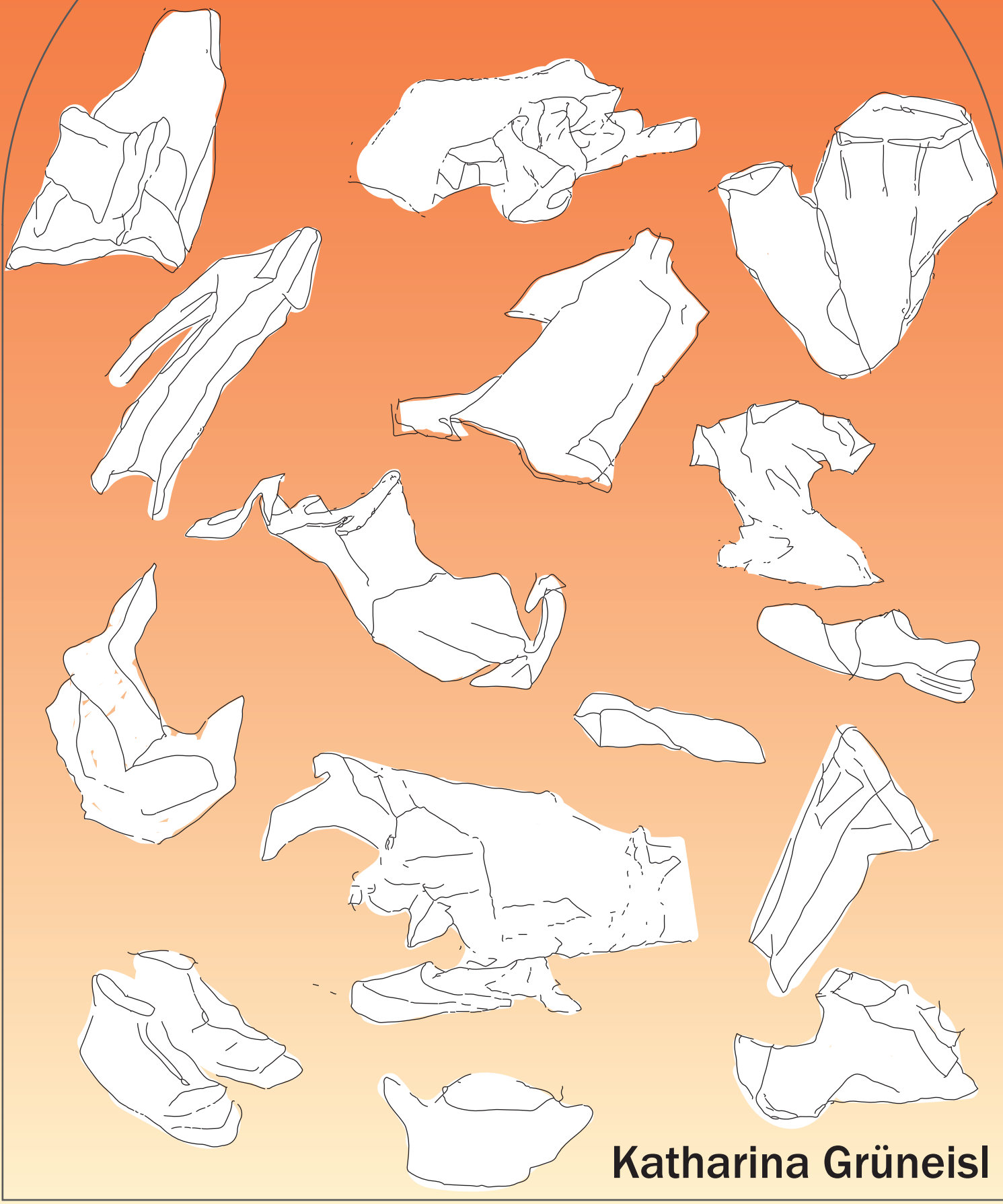
"*Fripe*" is the term used to refer to a heterogeneous array of imported second-hand donations and fast-fashion cast-offs in Tunisia that are part of the global second-hand trade. This thesis builds an account of the fripe as a singular urban economy in Tunis, the capital city. Firstly, it comprises a hitherto unwritten analysis of the fripe's historical constitution as a contested urban economy; demonstrating its distinct political economy and constructing counter-histories of urban renewal that reveal the role of the fripe trade and its rural migrant constituencies in remaking post-independence Tunis. These histories expose the systems of differentiation that operate to exclude the fripe from formally delimited realms of 'the national economy' and 'the planned urban order', while also partially incorporating it into modes of government and city-making. Secondly, it investigates the entanglements of contemporary processes of market- and space-making that position the fripe economy as a central agent of urban change, as captured in the vernacular word creation "*fripisation*". The ethnography of economic practices underpinning this investigation starts with the unstable commodity status of fripe imports, examining the situated processes of valuation that allow diverse garments and objects to enter renewed cycles of commodity circulation and exchange in Tunis. Centring on what is termed '*valuation work*' by diverse market-makers in the fripe economy, emphasis lies on how the economy is enacted in urban space and becomes constitutive to socio-spatial relations. Three '*collective enactments*' of fripe valuation demonstrate how the economy drives localised urban transformations; creates interdependencies and rhythms connecting disparate actors and sites; and allows the staging of temporary publicness. Overall, this thesis advances a perspective on the economy as operating through and as constitutive to urban space, positing the 'urban economy' as a tool to expand what can be brought to matter as economy in present-day cities.

The Fripe as Urban Economy

Market- and Space-Making in Tunis



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Note on illustrations:

The photos used in this thesis were taken by the author between January 2017 and December 2020, with the exception of Figure II.2. The maps were made by the author, in collaboration with the Tunisian association *Cartographie Citoyenne*. The cover and back page illustration were created by Aziza Gorgi.

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Note on transliteration and translation:

All direct interview quotes in the thesis are translated from Tunisian Arabic or French by the author. Quotations from non-English academic texts have been translated by the author. Cursive is used for Arabic and French terms that appear in the text and direct translation by the author is provided in brackets. For ease of reading, Arabic plural forms are sometimes rendered by adding -s. Tunisian Arabic terms are transcribed phonetically (these also include French terms used in Tunisian Arabic). Frequently recurring Tunisian Arabic terms in the text – many of which belong to the particular vocabulary of the fripe economy – are listed in this glossary.

al- = Arabic definite article
arsh = clan, tribe
arushiya = clan-based solidarity, collective identity
bala = tarpaulin bale in which fripe are packaged
baladiya = municipality
batenda = license (for trading; a shop space)
berwita = handcart
brocante = antiques
chinwa = made-in-China (often indiscriminately used for cheaply manufactured commodities)
cité = a planned (government) housing estate
crème (krema) = high-end fripe merchandise
diwana = customs authorities
farz = (fripe) sorting
faraza / (pl.) *farazet* = sorting worker
faubourg = suburb (used for the historic suburbs of the Tunis medina)
fripier(s) = fripe traders
gourbiville = slum settlement
hakim = government, also used to refer to the police and the state more broadly
halan al-bala = bale opening
hamla = campaign
houma = local neighbourhood
iqtisad (mwazi) = (parallel) economy
jaou = (good) atmosphere
marché = market, French term used for planned (municipal) markets in Tunis
marché aux puces = second-hand market
medina = historic old city of Tunis
nassab / (pl.) *nassaba* = itinerant/street vendor
nuzuh = derogatory term for rural migrants
oukala = sub-divided and dilapidated historic housing in the Tunis medina
ruba fikia = (old term for) second-hand clothes
sabkha = salt lake
sachet = here, see-through zipper bag, packaging for high-end fripe merchandise
shkara / (pl.) *shkair* = white tarpaulin bag, packaging for fripe
silaa (kontra) = (counterfeit) merchandise
souk / (pl.) *aswak* = market, Arabic term used for open-air and weekly markets in Tunis
tahrib = smuggling
thawra = revolution (with definite article "al-" often designating the 2011 Tunisian revolution)
qitaa = sector
wilaya = governorate
zwawila = poor people

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My greatest thanks go to the many 'market-makers' in the fripe – in and beyond Tunis – who shared their expertise, stories, working routines, and sometimes private homes and lives with me and without whom this thesis would not exist. Their generosity in bearing with my endless curiosity and persistent returns, their diligence and precision in explaining not only how an economy 'works' but also what it 'means', and their wit and humour have turned this research into an invaluable learning experience and underpin the wealth of the ethnographic material from which this account is built.

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These acknowledgments remain dreadfully incomplete and fail to reflect that this thesis is the product of a collaborative effort, with the words and ideas of innumerable interlocutors, colleagues, friends and family members directly or indirectly present in the final text. I thank all those who accompanied and shaped this project, from Durham, to Tunis, to Thalberg, and who made this journey so enjoyable and enriching. This research has gifted me not only with an insight into the fascinating universe of the fripe, but also with new friendships and a new home, and my gratitude to Tunis for this is boundless.

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Margit and Gerd, whose love, companionship and passion for collecting and transforming objects and materials into stages for play have inspired this work.

Introduction

Figure 1 The fripe trade has transformed a central Tunis alley (2017)

Introduction

In early July 2017, the Tunis governorate launched a campaign of unprecedented scale against informal markets (Middle East Monitor 2017; Économiste Maghrébin 2017). Timed to coincide with the Aid festivities at the end of the fasting month Ramadan, when many vendors had left Tunisia's capital city to visit their families, massive police deployments rapidly dismantled the dense street markets that had come to characterise the central city. The demolition of informally built-up market infrastructures, the confiscation of merchandise, and the arrest of dozens of vendors trying to resist the clearance was branded a "clean-up campaign" by the then-governor of Tunis Omar Mansour (Le Monde 2017). One of the central targets of the clearance campaign was the so-called "*fripe"* trade*,* the umbrella term used to designate a heterogeneous array of imported second-hand garments, used objects, as well as new, unsold textile stocks. A vernacular word creation, combining the term "*fripe"* with the ending "*-isation"* into "*fripisation"*, prominently featured in discourses justifying the violent clearance. Shop owners in the central city and members of the citizens' initiative "*Winouetrottoir"* (lit. where is the sidewalk), who had jointly lobbied the local authorities to clamp down on the proliferating markets, employed the term *fripisation* to describe what they considered to be a process of rapid urban degradation caused by the unchecked expansion of fripe trading and the associated presence of rural migrant traders in urban public space[1].

At first sight, this 2017 campaign in central Tunis appeared as one more example of the repressive governance of 'informal markets' or 'street vending' that has been amply documented in Arab cities in the aftermath of the 2011 revolutions (Abaza 2014; Brown et al. 2017; Bouhali 2017; Nagati and Stryker 2016), as well as in other cities across the African continent in recent years (e.g. Morange 2015; Spire and Choplin 2017; Steck et al. 2013; Young 2017). However, a closer look at the clearance's specific target, namely the urban fripe trade, complicates this narrative. Instead of an 'informal trade' or a marginal type of 'street vending', the fripe represents a ubiquitous and historically consolidated commercial activity in Tunis. Heterogeneous fripe imports – from second-hand shoes and fast-fashion cast-offs, to used objects spanning toys, kitchenware or accessories – are today traded in diverse urban marketplaces; from open-air, weekly *souks* on the urban peripheries, to covered markets in upper-middle-class residential areas, and historical fresh food markets in the inner-city that have gradually transformed into specialised fripe trading spaces. In differentiation from portrayals of the second-hand clothes trade as a mere subsistence economy of the urban poor (Brooks 2012), the fripe trade is structured as a hierarchical and differentiated economy in Tunisia that guarantees innumerable jobs and substantial profit margins to well-positioned importers, wholesalers and retail traders. As a consumer good, the fripe evokes not only "relations of need", but also "of desire" (Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2019: 81), with 83.4% of urban dwellers in Tunis buying regularly from the fripe[2].

The Tunisian word creation *fripisation* captures this complex positioning of the fripe in Tunis. The term describes the popularity, ubiquity and seemingly uncontrolled proliferation of fripe trading in the city, conferring a central role to the fripe in tangible processes of on-going urban change. Yet equally, the term's pejorative connotations associate the fripe trade with urban degradation and social marginality, positioning the fripe as an inherently unwanted presence and problem of urban governance. This thesis takes this tension as a productive entry point for reconsidering the fripe as an economy worthy of inquiry in its own right. Rather than reducing *fripisation* to a process of informal market proliferation, the thesis

[1] Appendix I., Interview 1;
[2] Unpublished consumer survey of the INC (Institut National de Consommation), April 2018 (see Appendix I. Interview 2): 30.4% of Tunis urban dwellers buy 'always' from the fripe, 53% buy 'regularly' from the fripe;

takes the deliberate linkages the term establishes between the fripe economy and specific processes of urban change to investigate the fripe as a *singular urban economy* in Tunis. Three central empirical questions arise from the tensions opened by the term *fripisation*: first, how does a global flow of heterogeneous second-hand and fast-fashion cast-offs translate into the 'fripe'; an evolving commodity form with distinct historicity and situated meanings that creates a specific realm of practice in Tunis? Second, how can the fripe's framing as 'informal' or 'unplanned' economy be reconciled with its consolidation as both a formally delimited economic sector and highly differentiated urban market form? Third, how can an apparently marginal realm of market-making and its diverse actors take centre stage in processes that co-constitute the contemporary city?

1. From global second-hand to urban fripe economy: unmaking scales to research the singular

The term *fripisation* derives from the unstable and heterogeneous product category of the fripe, which forms an ever-evolving material basis for the fripe economy in Tunisia. The mix of used garments, unsold fast-fashion stocks, second-hand objects and waste materials arriving on board of container ships in Tunisia share origin stories of discard, donation or disposal, mainly in Europe and North America. For diverse reasons, the materials were "cast out or judged superfluous in a particular space-time", and turned into "excess matter" (Gidwani and Reddy 2011: 1636, 1649), to become part of charity or commercial collection and subsequent export. Through their transnational circulations, fripe materials highlight the importance of thinking across - or rather beyond - scales for researching the fripe as a singular urban economy in Tunis. The evolving import materials firmly anchor the fripe economy in the global second-hand trade, and indeed underline Tunisia's prominent positioning in this rapidly growing market. Yet the oscillation of these import materials between discard and commodities demonstrates the situated processes of "commoditisation" (Kopytoff 1986: 66) that contingently requalify the discarded materials for cycles of circulation and exchange as 'fripe' specifically in Tunis.

As the following section sets out, transnational fripe circulations position Tunisia in a rapidly growing global second-hand economy, and thus on one of "the active frontiers of contemporary capitalism" (Roy 2011: 229). Yet, as the second section argues, a refusal to simply translate 'fripe' as 'second-hand' opens the multiple, situated meanings of the term, demonstrating the power of language in understanding the singular articulations of the global second-hand economy in Tunis. The third section elaborates on these evolving meanings of the term 'fripe', examining the heterogeneous imports it has described over time and the changing cultural significations it has taken on as a consequence. In combination, these sections develop an understanding of the 'urban' neither as a fixed scale of inquiry nor as an administratively delimited territory, but as an open and hybrid relational construct, "constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny" (Massey 2005: 9). By researching the singular urban articulations of a global economy, this research therefore engages in the "making and un-making of scale" (Tsing 2011: 58) from Tunis.

a. Tunisia in the global second-hand economy

Insisting on the singularity of the fripe, and thus its specificity to the city of Tunis, by no means implies investigating it as separable from, or "alternative" to, global capitalism (Gibson-Graham 1996). On the contrary, the fripe must be situated firmly in the global second-hand economy, and thus as an inherent element of a broader transnational waste, recycling and reuse economy that is a product of "capitalist

surplus accumulation" (Gidwani and Reddy 2011: 1625). In such transnational "geographies of waste" (Moore 2012), diverse discard materials and objects – for instance, electronics (Lepawsky 2015), plastics (Furniss 2015), or ships (Gregson et al. 2010) – form the basis of economic processes at the 'back end' of global value chains. The fripe specifically is part of the global second-hand clothes trade, which not only includes used garment circulations from the Global North to the Global South (Brooks 2015; Hansen 2000(b); Norris 2010), but also diverse cross-border economies (Sandoval-Hernandez and Loureiro 2017; Milgram 2008; Sandoval-Hernandez and Rosenfeld 2019; Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2019) and complex geographies of second-hand trade linking places around the world (Abimbola 2012; Kouakou 2017). The largest suppliers of used garments continue to be charity organisations in Europe and North America, but global geographies of second-hand trading are changing rapidly, with former importers like China developing into net exporters, and with ever-larger quantities of unsold fast-fashion stocks entering cycles of second-hand trade (Hansen 2019: 51). Official estimates put trading volumes of used garments at roughly 4 million tons annually, but data on the economy remains notoriously patchy (Minter 2019: 134).

Tunisia's role in the global second-hand clothes trade has thus far attracted little scholarly interest. This is despite the country of a population of less than 12 million ranking amongst the largest importers and re-exporters of used garments on the African continent[3]. Only Hansen's overview of the global dynamics of the used garment trade mentions Tunisia in passing, declaring the country an "exception in Muslim-dominated North Africa" due to its large import volumes (Hansen 2000(b): 252). Linked to the alleged cultural and religious unacceptability of second-hand consumption in Muslim-majority countries (ibid), the relative unimportance of used garment imports in North Africa compared to Sub-Saharan Africa has been reiterated (Haggblade 1990: 508-509). With the exception of Dubai's main container port Jebel Ali, the MENA region has thus remained a relative blind spot on the map of the global second-hand trade (Gregson and Crang 2015: 165).

In fact though, Tunisia and other North African states were similar to other countries in colonial dependency that began to receive European used garment exports from the 19th century onward, when European technological innovation gradually resulted in apparel surplus production and reduced local demand for second-hand clothes (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 228; Hansen 2000(a): 69; Lemire 2012: 61). Tunisia received contingents of European used garments from the early 20th century onwards, and large-scale fripe imports began in 1943, when war-time surplus materials from France, and later the other Allied Forces, were shipped to different destinations in North Africa. Such military fripe imports were then replaced by civilian clothing, and the United States became a key supplier of Tunisia from the 1960s onwards. The 1995 decision of then-president of Tunisia Zine El Abidine Ben Ali to grant fripe import and re-export activities an offshore status[4] set Tunisia apart from its neighbouring countries in its positioning in the global second-hand clothes trade. The 1995 law exonerated the fripe from import taxes in Tunisia, encouraging the relocation of labour-intensive sorting processes of second-hand clothes from Europe to Tunisia to save labour costs, in the context of a six-fold growth of second-hand clothes exports globally between 1980 and 1995 (Hansen 2000(a): 115). Tunisian migrant entrepreneurs in particular, who had begun to specialise in commercial used garment collection and export in Europe during the 1980s and 1990s, were now encouraged to reinvest in Tunisia (Boubakri 2002: 8). From 1995 to 1999, 54 factories for the systematic separation, sorting and re-packaging of used garments were newly licensed as industrial enterprises in Tunisia[5], establishing the country as a

[3] Data from the Observatory for Economic Complexity on used clothes imports in Africa between 2015-2017, https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/import/show/all/6309/2015/, accessed July 2nd 2019;
[4] Decree N°1995–2396 of the 2nd of December 1995;
[5] Official list of Association de la Promotion de l'Industrie et de l'Innovation (APII), (Appendix I. Interview 3);

major re-export hub for second-hand clothes, predominantly coming from Europe and with end destinations in West Africa.

Today, Tunisia remains doubly imbricated in the global textile market. Firstly, export-oriented textile manufacturing has been encouraged in Tunisia through offshore legislation since 1972 (Dlala 2006), turning the country into the 5th largest supplier of apparel to the European market[6], especially for fast-fashion giants like Inditex (APII 2017). Secondly, 47 fripe sorting factories continue to operate in Tunisia and an unprecedented increase in fripe import volumes – with estimates varying widely from 120,000 to 150,000 tons a year[7] – occurred between 2015 and 2018. The development of global "fast-fashion systems of provisions" that accelerated turnover cycles on the clothing market not only conferred a competitive advantage to Tunisia as a cheap and geographically proximate manufacturing location, it also triggered a surge in second-hand exports (Brooks 2015: 89, 69) that increased Tunisia's importance as sorting and re-export location, as well as end consumer market. Ever-greater quantities of fripe merchandise on the domestic market combined with the growing percentage of 'new' unsold fashion stocks amongst the imports (LeBorgne 2020) testify to escalating surplus production and a growing disposal problem in the global textile industry (Bloomberg 2018). In turn, this underpins record predicted growth levels for the global second-hand economy (Ellen MacArthur Foundation 2017; Info durable 2019; thred-UP 2020) and has fuelled recent "trade wars" over second-hand exports (Aljazeera 2019; The New York Times 2020; Quartz Africa 2018).

Sorted fripe clothes are thus exported from Tunisia across the globe. While high-end fripe merchandise is increasingly re-exported to Europe to supply the burgeoning vintage market[8], wearable garments are dispatched all over West Africa and the Near and Middle East, and rag materials are shipped mainly to India and Pakistan[9]. A significant part of the imports is also sold on to Algeria, where fripe imports have been outlawed since 2009 (Liberté Algérie 2017). Yet, despite quotas limiting domestic sales, the bulk of fripe imports makes its way onto the Tunisian market and in particular to the capital city, entering into cycles of valuation, circulation and exchange that provide the basis of this research into the fripe as singular urban economy.

b. Researching the singular urban articulations of a global economy

The complex transnational connections constituting the global second-hand and reuse economy define the fripe as "objects-in-motion" (Appelgren and Bohlin 2015(a): 148). Rather than investigating the transnational trajectories of discard (e.g. Gregson et al. 2010; Lepawsky and Mather 2011), this thesis develops a situated approach to researching global connections as articulated through "friction" (Tsing 2011: 5) in a particular urban environment. It examines the place-specific cycles of valuation, circulation and exchange that define the fripe as an urban economy, rather than a mere local case-study of the global second-hand trade. By studying the singular articulations through which supposedly universal market forces become articulated in particular localities, this research builds on ethnographies that have debunked the myth of global capitalism as an homogenising process (e.g. Gidwani 2008; Li

[6] The textile sector remains the single largest source of (predominantly female) industrial employment in Tunisia;

[7] Quantitative data on used clothing imports is unreliable, and yet a net annual increase in both used garments imports and exports to and from Tunisia can be observed since the 1990s (UN Comtrade, 1995, 1998, accessed August 2019, available at: https://comtrade.un.org/db/dqBasicQueryResults.aspx?px=S3&cc=2690&r=788&y=1998), import volume estimates remain disputed between different Ministries and the OCT (Office du Commerce Tunisien) (Appendix I. Interview 7) and the interval here provided thus represents the average of all government estimates obtained;

[8] Interview with vintage shops in Paris (Appendix I. Interview 4) and two Tunisian importers (Appendix I. Interview 5, 6);

[9] Both import and re-export locations vary annually, so this only provides a crude overview of chief destinations;

2014; Tsing 2011). To research such articulations, this thesis explores how the entry of diverse discard materials into Tunisia enables their translation into 'fripe' and thus their open-ended remaking into new commodity forms.

The contingent translations of discard objects into fripe thus form part of broader "material cultures" in which "the contradictions held within general concepts such as the domestic or the global are in practice resolved in everyday life" (Miller 1998(a): 19). The fripe is therefore approached as a heterogeneous object category with an unstable "commodity situation", foregrounding an understanding of value as malleable and context-specific (Appadurai 1986: 13). Such cultural translation processes frequently involve linguistic translation, as demonstrated by anthropological research on the processes of appropriation, adjustment and innovation that occur through transnational commodity circulation. For instance, the transformation of the Indian "rickshaw" into the Egyptian "touktouk" illustrates the production of "creole technologies" and their situated economies (Tastevin 2012: 11). In literature on second-hand economies, the local terms for used garments – like "*salaula"* in Zambia (Hansen 2000(a)), "*asamsé"* in Equatorial Guinea (Valenciano-Mane 2018) or "*baleh"* in Palestine (Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2019) – similarly provide an entry point for examining the specific cultural meanings and practices that emerge around second-hand imports.

This research draws upon such perspectives to insist on the importance of language and the inherent untranslatability of the vernacular Tunisian term *'fripe'.* The term 'fripe' itself is the starting point for developing this approach: first, the term fripe has been used consistently over time despite the evolution of the material imports it describes, from military surplus materials to second-hand donations and fast fashion cast-offs. Consequently, the political, economic and cultural associations of the term have also changed. Second, the term fripe has extended its meaning from this initial designation of heterogeneous import products, to denote specific market forms and a consolidated economic sector in Tunisia. In addition, the meanings of the term have expanded through its adaptation or integration into vernacular word creations, such as the term *fripisation* that is central to this thesis because it opens up connections between market- and space-making in contemporary Tunis. Beyond this single term, the wider language of the fripe is a tool for researching the singular articulations of the global second-hand economy in Tunis. Specific vocabulary offers entry points for researching the practices of the fripe economy, revealing in turn how the economy is constituted through continuous meaning-making. Together, these terms form a contingent structure – or temporary stabilisation of meanings – that renders legible and knowable the fripe as singular urban economy.

Language is thus a vehicle that makes visible the singular that emerges in the articulation of a global flow of discard in a particular urban context. Beyond a mere insistence on local specificity, vernacular language as a basis for knowledge production exposes the dominant "vocabulary of the economy as political construction that needs contesting" (Massey 2013: 7). It thus is not only a means of countering claims of homogenisation, but also to change what can be recognised as an object of economic analysis and how economies can be rendered knowable. Ontologically, an intentional decision to "expand vocabularies" therefore signals "an expansion of the life-worlds under consideration" (Bhan 2019: 2), bringing diverse spatial, social and cultural processes of the fripe into the realm of the economy. Epistemologically, staying with the specific language of the fripe implies drawing attention to the generative aspects of imperfect translation, opening up an "orientation toward the singular" (Jazeel 2019: 6). This approach to knowledge production is the basis for understanding the fripe as 'urban economy', giving it a distinct politics. Instead of showing the 'urban' as a prefix that denotes a fixed scale of economic activity, the composite of the 'urban economy' opens up the productive tension inherent to the fripe between the global and the singular.

c. The 'fripe': stable terminology for an unstable product group

Unpacking the multi-layered meanings of the term fripe in Tunis is therefore crucial for researching the fripe as urban economy, when language is considered as "immanent and material" (Gidwani 2008: 163) and thus constitutive to the object of inquiry. In Tunisia, the French term "*fripe"* or "*friperie"*[10] entered common language and official records with the onset of large quantities of war-time surplus materials during the final years of WWII. Designated as "*fripe militaire"* (military fripe), a diverse array of second-hand military equipment from soldier boots to uniforms, as well as camp beds, blankets or nursing uniforms were imported by the Allied Forces, mainly France and the United States, to Tunisia. As the import of "*fripe*" materials from abroad gradually superseded local systems of used garment collection in Tunisia, the term fripe replaced the older designation "*ruba fikia"*. Derived from the Italian "*roba vecchia*" (old stuff), *ruba fikia* had been in use since at least the 19th century[11] (Clancy-Smith 2012: 61), denoting a circular system of used clothes collection and resale that was predominantly based on door-to-door bartering. The term fripe explicitly referred to imported – rather than locally collected – second-hand materials, with heterogeneous garments, textile materials and objects held together by their shared trajectories of transnational circulation on container ships. The term then became vernacularised through its use with the Arabic definite article, becoming "*al-fripe"* in Tunisian Arabic.

While the terminology for fripe materials has therefore remained stable in Tunisia since the 1940s, the category of products it describes has in fact evolved considerably since then, entailing a shift of meanings and perceptions attached to the term. First, the content of transnational shipments of fripe materials changed radically over time: military surplus materials were initially replaced by post-war used garment shipments from the US during the 1960s (Van Groen and Lozer 1976: 4) and then by increasing amounts of commercially collected second-hand products from Europe, especially France and Italy, during the 1980s and 1990s. Subsequently, the growing importance of Tunisia as an intermediary location for the sorting and re-export of second-hand clothes – mainly travelling from Europe to West Africa – during the second half of the 1990s led to a rapid increase in the quantity, but also in the breadth of choice of second-hand garments and used objects sold as fripe on the Tunisian market. In addition to growing contingents of what is referred to as "*fripe de luxe*" – high-end brand articles at times traded for elevated prices – fripe imports today also comprise ever-growing contingents of new, unsold garment stocks.

As a consequence, the fripe evades any straightforward or fixed definition as a product category: first, the imports continuously evolve with cycles of donation and discard in Europe and North America, thus mirroring changing consumer habits 'elsewhere' and varying trade relations as commercial collection and import locations vary over time. Second, the contemporary legal definition of the fripe in Tunisia, established in 1995 and amended in 2005[12], digresses considerably from what is actually imported and traded as fripe. Not only are many of the imported second-hand objects banned from sale on the domestic market – from shoes, to toys and leatherwear – the legal category of fripe only comprises 'used garments and objects', therefore excluding growing contingents of leftover unsold fast-fashion stocks that are now traded as fripe. Finally, the often-blurry lines between used garments and textile

[10] According to the French historical dictionary *Le Littré,* (*Littré* 2007), the term originates from the ancient French term "*freppe"* which translates as "rag" and derives from the Latin word "*faluppa"*, designating a "piece of textile" but also "a thing without value"; the term fripe continues to be used in most francophone contexts to designate second-hand clothes (Bredeloup 2016);

[11] A type of Creole Italian, referred to as "*Italian of Barbary*", constituted an important lingua franca in Tunis at the time;

[12] The 2005 amendment of law n°2005–2038, Journal Officiel de la République Tunisienne, 26 July 2005: 1896;

waste, especially in shipping containers, allow for the import of waste products under the label of fripe and their subsequent illicit disposal in Tunisia[13].

The changing content of container loads of fripe imports to Tunisia has also altered cultural perceptions of the fripe. While second-hand trade and consumption in the Global South have often been understood primarily as a source of subsistence (Brooks 2012), scholarly work has also stressed the differentiated cultures of consumption that have emerged through used garment imports in different contexts (Hansen 2000(a); Isla 2013). Contrary to predictions that a surge in made-in-China garment imports would reduce demand for second-hand clothes (Bredeloup and Lombard 2007), the prevalence of cheaply manufactured Asian imports increased the appeal of 'second-hand' in diverse contexts, with consumers valuing durability and brand authenticity (Ayimpam 2016; Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2019). Similarly, the fripe in Tunisia evolved from charity destined for the needy and banned from commercial sale during the 1940s, to a ubiquitous commercial good and mainstream consumer choice. In differentiation from many other MENA region cities, where second-hand consumption remains associated with a sense of "'*ayb"* (shame) (Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2019: 64), long genealogies of fripe consumption in Tunisia have destigmatised it as a consumer good. Today the fripe appeals to urban dwellers of diverse age groups, gender and social class, increasingly becoming incorporated into elite consumer cultures[14] of an urban upper-middle-class clientele (Meshkal 2020).

As an evolving import category and heterogeneous grouping of materials, the fripe thus resists unequivocal definition or clear-cut delimitation. The multi-layered meanings of the term fripe in Tunisia hold open the relations between transnationally circulating materials, distinct genealogies of second-hand trade and consumption, and contemporary cultural meanings and situated practices that have come to define the fripe as an unstable commodity form that animates cycles of circulation and exchange in Tunis. Shifts in the economy's discursive constitution and evolving significations reflect not only evolving material circulations and changing urban and economic configurations. They also signal the participation of diverse actors in producing, contesting or manipulating knowledge of the fripe economy over time. These inherent instabilities and ambiguities that have characterised the term fripe direct inquiry to the economy's discursive and performative constitution as 'black box', or as a realm evading attempts of systematic knowledge production. Simultaneously, however, the vernacular term *al-fripe* has come to designate historically consolidated economic structures and urban forms that counter contemporary framings of *fripisation* as ephemeral proliferation and a bracketing of the fripe as 'informal urban economy'.

2. Beyond informality: the fripe as economic and spatial formation

As the word creation *fripisation* became incorporated into post-2011 discourses decrying the degradation of the urban environment through sprawling fripe markets, it took on an increasingly pejorative tone. During the 2017 clearance campaign, discourses of *fripisation* thus positioned the fripe trade as an illegitimate agent of urban change, similar to other 'informal markets' in the city. In addition, local decision makers and the media prominently portrayed the fripe trade as a mafia-like business, associating the phenomenon of *fripisation* with various illicit trading and profit-making practices (Espace Manager 2016(b); Inkyfada 2014; Kapitalis 2018). In spite of the fripe's undisputed popularity

[13] Interview with shipping company in the *Rades* container port (Appendix I., Interview 8) and observations on illegal dumping ground in proximity of fripe sorting factory in Bizerte (Appendix I., Interview 5);
[14] New forms of fripe retail, such as high-end chain stores, cater specifically to this clientele (Appendix I, Interview 40);

as a consumer good, the prominence of its marketplaces, and the trade's long urban legacy in Tunis, the term *fripisation* thus seemed to straightforwardly describe an informal urban economy.

However, as this section explores, a closer examination of the fripe's historical constitution as an urban economy in present-day Tunis precludes such a-priori framings, instead unsettling the very "epistemologies of the formal and informal" (Roitman 2007: 159). The use of *al-fripe* to describe a sector of the Tunisian economy and a specific urban market form renders visible the fripe as an historically constituted economic and spatial structure, posing the question of why its present-day positioning as urban economy remains contested. To address this question, the following sections outline how researching the fripe as an urban economy necessitates interrogating the systems of differentiation that determine what can be 'known' as, first, 'the economy' and, second, 'the planned urban order'.

a. The fripe as 'unknowable economy'?

Writing on the performativity of economic knowledge has demonstrated how the tools, devices and models provided by the discipline of economics played a crucial role in bringing 'the economy' into being (Callon 1998; Mitchell 2014), turning it into an "object of knowledge and power" during the 20th century" (Mitchell 2008: 1117). Calculative models and devices (Caliskan and Callon 2009, 2010) thus underpinned processes of "framing" (Callon 1998: 17) that performatively delimited the economy from other realms of human life. Diverse "technologies of organization, measurement, calculation, and representation" then helped to enact such aggregates as "the national economy" (Mitchell 2008: 1120). Consequently, managing "future predictions" – on the basis of diverse indicators and measurements for the 'national economy' – came to "stipulate government decisions in the present" (Mitchell 2014: 492).

Authoritative knowledge production, underpinned by the expertise of economists, therefore defined the contours of 'the economy' and diverse legal provisions helped to fix such definitions. This system of differentiation naturally excluded diverse 'economic activities' – in the broad sense of managing resources – from the realm defined as 'the national economy'. Consequently, all those "production processes that represent complex cultural and social machines and for which economics has little concepts, language or methods to engage with" began to be "bracketed as grey zones, infra-economies or informal economies that were left to anthropologists and geographers to describe" (Peraldi 2018: 7). At times, the alleged absence of production processes in the classical sense – for instance in waste and reuse economies – became the basis for relegating certain economies to the status of "infra-economies" that were "denied recognition by the state and civil society" (Gidwani and Maringanti 2016: 114). Highlighting waste as a transient category (Thompson 1979: 85), waste economies point to an "excess that capital can never fully capture (…) as it exceeds the waste-value dialectic" and thus constitutes a potential "threat" to logics of capitalist accumulation (Gidwani 2013: 779). The exclusion of waste economies from realms of official state knowledge has underpinned tendencies to approach waste or reuse economies as "non-state or informal economies" in scholarly work (Grant and Oteng 2012: 4), with an emphasis on the role of "informal actor-networks" in enabling transnational circulations (Peraldi 2018: 8).

The global second-hand clothes economy constitutes one of the reuse economies that has often been positioned outside the realm of 'the formal economy'. First, this is due to a lack of official knowledge on the economy: the indeterminate classification of 'used clothes' enables practices of non- or mis-declaration and thus renders international trading statistics unreliable (Hansen 2019: 50). In addition,

the ban of used clothing imports in many contexts means that the trade remains often undeclared (Abimbola 2011; Machado and Loureiro 2015; Milgram 2008), which has earnt it the reputation of a "shadow world" (Brooks 2015: 72). Second, the absence of a productive process in the classical sense or the often-asserted detrimental effect of used clothing imports on apparel production (Brooks and Simon 2012; Frazer 2008) have often disqualified second-hand clothes from being considered part of the 'national economy'. Similarly, the fripe economy in Tunisia is frequently portrayed as "*sanduq akhal"* or "*boite noire"* (black box), and thus as a realm both undeserving, and evasive, of formal knowledge production. Tunisian institutions charged with knowledge production on 'the economy' – from diverse ministries, to the customs authorities, to public research and statistics institutes –hence underscore the absence of knowledge on the fripe. This is often justified by the fripe's unproductive character and thus lack of added value to 'the economy', differentiating it from "*qitaat adiya"* (normal economic sectors), most prominently industrial sectors like "*quitaa al-nasij"* (the textile sector)[15]. Relatedly, the fripe is prominently framed as "*iqtisad mawazi*" (parallel economy), and thus as a realm beyond government oversight and control.

Yet, despite such portrayals, the term *al-fripe* today also designates a hierarchically structured and formally delimited sector of the Tunisian economy. In fact, the incorporation of the fripe into Tunisia's post-independence political economy progressively expanded the meaning of *al-fripe*, from a heterogeneous import category to the designation of a wider set of economic practices around the materials, from sorting to distributing and trading. Gradually, the fripe thus became officially constituted as "*quitaa al-fripe"* (the fripe sector), most comprehensively defined in the 1995 framework legislation that remains in place today. The fripe as a 'formal sector' has since come to describe a particular import and customs regime, industrial sorting processes, and centrally regulated licensing and taxation procedures for wholesalers and retailers. At the same time, however, the term *al-fripe* always designated a much wider set of practices, actors and locations than those comprised by the legal definition of the fripe as "*quitaa rasmi"* (formal sector).

To illuminate this conundrum of the fripe as a "multiply governed" economic sector that nevertheless retains an "ungoverned quality" (Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2019: 19), this research offers an investigation into the fripe's evolving political economy. The mismatch between *al-fripe* as a formally circumscribed economic sector and as an actual realm of economic activity requires interrogating the politics that have underpinned the fripe economy's ambiguous positioning between "the normal" and "what needs to be disciplined" (Das and Poole 2004: 8). Through an historically attuned analysis, the state becomes visible as a dispersed actor with often-contradictory agendas (Sharma and Gupta 2006) that actively constituted and perpetuated the fripe's performative constitution as a 'black box', or as a realm beyond state knowledge and control. This in turn draws attention to the apparent "margins of state power" as crucial sites for unpacking the performativity of governance (Roitman 2004: 193) and for reconsidering "illegality as evolving political construct" (Bennafla 2014: 1340).

b. From 'informal market proliferation' to the fripe as realm of city-making

The systems of differentiation that have positioned the fripe on the margins of shifting delimitations of 'the economy' also pushed the urban fripe trade beyond "the limits of recognition, archives and recording" (Roy 2011: 227) that delineate what can be considered part of the historically constituted 'urban order' in Tunis. The performative framings that exclude certain economic activities from 'the

[15] Industrial fripe sorting is regulated as part of the Tunisian textile sector and is thus under the responsibility of the Ministry of Industry;

national economy' thus work simultaneously to omit them from urban planning or development policies. Consequently, such economic activities remain confined to 'informal' occupations of space that in turn renders them 'transgressive' of urban property regimes and so vulnerable to eviction or other forms of repressive governance.

While there is no single, established body of scholarship on urban economies, what is called 'urban studies' has discussed how diverse forms of 'economy' are not only located in, but also actively reshape, contemporary cities. Two distinct scholarly foci mirror the systems of differentiation set out above, with a first strand of research focusing on economic forces that are intentionally accommodated, and thus 'included' in urban planning and development policies, and a second strand investigating economies that remain 'excluded' and are often repressively governed as 'informal economies'. The first strand has discussed relationships between hegemonic market forces and city-making, for instance through speculative urban development (Shin and Kim 2016), creative urban economies as drivers of neoliberal growth agendas (Peck 2005), or the production of aesthetic registers deemed conducive to urban competitiveness and 'world city' status (Ghertner 2011). Such research has also drawn attention to the exclusions produced by such policies, resulting not only in displacements of residents (Leitner and Sheppard 2018; Lees et al. 2015), but also of forms of economic activity judged incompatible with development agendas. From the closure of mills and factories in Bangalore for freeing up space for speculative real estate development (Goldman 2011; Gupta and Medappa 2020), to the mass displacement of small-scale manufacturing workshops in Cairo to attract financial capital and develop modern consumption spaces (Abaza 2001; Denis 2009; Elyachar 2005); the systems of differentiation drawing lines between desirable and undesirable 'urban economies' often translate into the top-down imposition of radical urban change processes.

The second strand of research in urban studies has focused – explicitly or implicitly – on 'informal economies', often in cities in the Global South. This research has frequently explored people's livelihood-making strategies in conditions of urban uncertainty, from practices of "hustling" (Di Nunzio 2019; Thieme 2013, 2017), to the art of striking alliances or "knotting" (De Boeck 2015(b)), to devising mechanisms of "navigating the city" (McFarlane and Silver 2017). Such ethnographic analysis highlights the imbrication of diverse income-generating activities in webs of social, cultural and political relations that unfold in, and are constitutive to, urban space. Certain research has also focused more specifically on informal markets and street vending. Setting out from transgressions of formal property regimes (Brown et al. 2015; Steck et al. 2013) and infringements on public space (Anjaria 2006), such scholarly work often emphasises the contested urban governance of informal trading activities. Moments of confrontation, such as clearance and relocation campaigns, therefore frequently become starting points for exploring the political agendas (Huang et al. 2014; Young 2017) and urban development strategies (Boonjubun 2017; Spire and Choplin 2017) underpinning the repressive governance of 'informal economies'.

Dominant framings of the fripe associate it with such 'informal urban economies', both in categorising the economic activities and the spatial forms that mark its presence in the city. This research however constructs an account of the fripe as urban economy that interrogates the prefix of the 'informal'. It emphasises the fripe economy's role in structuring urban space, taking issue with the association of "the informal" with "a lack of form", which has at times translated into a focus on "pure improvisation, transience and simplicity" (Gago 2017: 15, 48), or a disproportionate emphasis on "the kinetic" over "the static" (Mehrotra 2002: 98). Countering such portrayals, the fripe is shown to be an historically constituted market form, building upon scholarship that has examined the historicity of marketplaces that otherwise tend to be approached as ephemeral or devoid of structure (Monteith 2019). In Tunis, the

term *al-fripe* has come to denominate distinct and stable market forms, demonstrating the fripe trade's capacity to lastingly alter urban space. Beyond a narrow focus on marketplaces, or general terms such as "street trading" that have often precluded "an interest in economic activities per se" (Morange 2015: 253), this thesis deliberately investigates how specific economic processes can order urban space. It therefore extends research on North African cities that has examined the role of trade with made-in-China commodities in structuring not only marketplaces, but entire commercial districts (Bouhali 2016, 2018) or urban conglomerations (Gherbi et al. 2016).

Rather than an exclusive focus on urban commerce though, this thesis also draws upon studies that have examined how dispersed production activities and their networks of distribution – for instance in Delhi's pirate media economy – restructure urban space, "making use of old and new spatial forms" and "producing urban density" (Sundaram 2004: 65). Similarly, the fripe's functioning as an urban economy here becomes the basis for analysing its role in city-making. Diverse processes of spatial production in the fripe economy – from the auto-construction of markets to the adaptation of existing infrastructures – have occurred in defiance of planning regulations or policies and thus remain illegible as forms of 'urban order'. Yet this research insists on rendering legible the mechanisms of incorporation that have allowed the fripe economy to play a constitutive and structuring role in city-making, thus unsettling stable notions of 'planned' and 'unplanned' or 'formal' and 'informal' urban space.

3. Market- and space-making: the fripe's enactment as urban economy

The vernacular word creation *fripisation* explicitly captures this sense of the fripe as a process of city-making, and although employed in diverse contexts and with diverging meanings, the term always confers agency to the fripe – as an unstable object group or an evolving spatial and economic configuration – in processes of change. While it can be used to designate the fripe's growing prominence in consumption habits, private wardrobes, or working lives, *fripisation* is most prominently employed to relate the fripe to on-going urban transformations. Capturing interrelations between a particular material object, economic processes and urban change, *fripisation* opens the contemporary entanglements of market- and space-making in the fripe economy in Tunis.

To comprehend how economic processes in the fripe structure urban space, this research provides a close-up analysis of market-making, drawing upon marketization approaches. As a realm beyond formal representations of 'the market', researching the fripe necessitates an ethnography of economic practice that analyses the contingent forms of *valuation work* that underpin market-making and situate it in urban space. This draws attention to the diverse market-makers involved in fripe valuation, advancing an understanding of the economy as *collectively enacted* in, and constitutive to, urban space. By using this approach for understanding the fripe's constitution as contemporary urban economy, this research opens a new perspective on urban transformation in Tunis, where an allegedly marginal urban trade like the fripe has rarely been considered an agent of city-making.

a. Market-making as '*valuation work*' and the production of urban space

A conceptual and empirical understanding of the economy as constituted in-process is foregrounded in approaches that show how "the economy" and "the market" are not stable and autonomous but rather are performatively constituted through the discipline of economics (Callon 1998; Mitchell 1998). *Fripisation* thus echoes writing on "marketization" or "market-making", which has investigated the role

of diverse calculative agencies, technologies and mechanisms of representation in contingently enacting the market, and in altering and renegotiating its delimitations over time (Berndt and Boeckler 2009, 2011; Çalışkan 2010; Çalışkan and Callon 2009, 2010). While this thesis shares a focus on processes of market-making, it departs from marketization approaches in two ways. First, as objects oscillating between discard and commodity, the fripe preclude a conception of market-making as a hegemonic project of representation conditioned by economics as a discipline. Instead, the fripe's unstable commodity status necessitates an ethnographic examination of the processes of valuation that form the basis for market-making. Second, *fripisation* foregrounds an understanding of market-making as a spatial practice, setting it in distinct and evolving urban geographies.

The empirical focus on the fripe as a material basis of the economy requires attention to market-making practices with discarded objects, hence drawing attention to a sphere of the market that often eludes calculation attempts. *Fripisation* thus draws attention to economic processes rather than their representation, digressing from notions of homogenising 'market expansion' or imaginaries of "perfectly competitive markets" (Garcia-Parpet 1986). Rather, the fripe as unstable commodities in-process (Kopytoff 1986: 64) elucidate the diverse social, cultural and political processes that "lie inside the frame" of the market, avoiding the risk of "mistaking a representation of economic life for its practice" (Miller 2002: 219). Instead, empirical emphasis lies on comprehending "the actual practice of economies" (ibid: 224) through "observations of what people actually do with things" (ibid 1998(a): 12). Processes of valuation – or contingent requalification – that enable the fripe to recirculate as commodities and to enter renewed cycles of exchange in Tunis, thus take centre stage. While most fripe materials remain physically intact, or even unchanged, in their trajectories of circulation in Tunis, intangible "processes of translation" (Tsing 2013: 23) – such as sorting, re-packaging, or staging in the marketplace – allow objects to become "enrolled in new configurations" (Gregson et al. 2010: 853) that requalify them as commodities.

In addition, the prominent role *fripisation* confers to the fripe in driving change processes that become tangible or physically manifest in the urban environment requires an exploration of market-making as operating both in and through urban space. Marketization literature has been critiqued for its relative disinterest in "market spaces and their material means of realisation" or the way in which "place matters to the performance of markets" (Barnes 2008: 1443). By establishing an explicit link between economic processes and urban space, *fripisation* invites a deliberately spatial analysis of market-making, relating "circuits and networks of value" to the "practice and performance of economic geographies" (Lee 2006: 414). To investigate market-making as a spatial process, this inquiry builds on a conception of space as a "product of interrelations (…) that is always in the process of being made" and thus remains open to change (Massey 2005: 9), here specifically through diverse forms of fripe valuation.

Consequently, the approach to market-making developed in this thesis explicitly relates an ethnographic analysis of fripe valuation to situated processes of spatial transformation. Central to this perspective is *valuation work*, a term that is chosen to emphasise the distributed efforts, or multiple individual and collective performances, required to retrieve or generate value from the fripe, thus animating new cycles of circulation and exchange in Tunis. The term 'work' holds together diverse economic practices – beyond habitual distinctions between formal labour and informal work, or production and consumption – thus expanding the possible market-making agencies and highlighting the often-incommensurable registers of value and modes of calculation that co-exist and collide in the making of a particular urban economy. As this research demonstrates, situated valuation work around diverse fripe objects co-constitutes the urban locations in which it occurs, as particular working processes structure urban space, alter its uses and meanings, and at times become manifest in the urban built environment or in

consolidated socio-spatial ordering patterns. At the same time, valuation work is never approached as contained in particular urban locations, but rather is examined for how it sets in motion diverse circulations that generate linkages and interdependencies between geographically distant actors and sites, producing urban space relationally.

b. Socio-material relations and the '*collective enactment'* of the urban fripe economy

Market-making is often understood as a process of framing or disentanglement, intended to neatly delimit 'the market' as a bounded set of agencies. This thesis takes a different approach, placing emphasis on the multiple relations that connect seemingly disparate sites and actors of valuation work and together constitute a basis for market-making in the contemporary urban fripe economy. Following conceptions of "waste as infrastructural", in the sense that its circulation "facilitates processes, affects and practices" (Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2019: 23), the fripe as a hybrid discard-commodity here becomes the starting point for connecting situated processes of valuation. This implies centring on the ways in which diverse actors are connected through their involvement in valuation work with fripe objects across the city, foregrounding the socio-material relations of market-making.

Researching 'urban space' as relationally constituted through particular socio-material assemblages draws on ethnographic research on urban infrastructures. Such scholarship has explored how diverse forms of infrastructure – from networked, material systems to seemingly immaterial social relations – can variably connect and separate distant and proximate sites and actors, producing effects of both urban integration and fragmentation (e.g. Anand 2011; Mains 2012; Björkman 2015; Guma 2020; Larkin 2008; Fredericks 2018; McFarlane 2008). Some of this research has discussed cities in the MENA region, often with an emphasis on the – at times deliberate – incompleteness or uneven distribution and reach of infrastructural systems, bringing to the fore a contested politics of infrastructure (e.g. Arefin 2019; Elyachar 2010; Günel 2019; Nolte and Yacobi 2015; Nucho 2016; Verdeil 2009). This thesis builds upon such infrastructural approaches insofar as it examines how processes of fripe valuation "enable circulations and distributions of goods, knowledge, meaning, people, and power" (De Boeck 2012). It thus comprehends valuation processes as interconnected socio-material arrangements that become structuring to the urban economy.

The starting point for analysing these structuring processes of the economy is an ethnographic examination of the often mundane practices through which different actors perform valuation with fripe objects. This research therefore draws upon scholarship that has insisted on the importance of analysing "the everyday" (Graham and McFarlane 2015: 2) as revelatory of the continuous making and unmaking of the basic infrastructures of urban living (e.g. Ayimpam 2014; De Boeck and Plissart 2004; De Boeck 2015(a), 2015(b); Simone 2004, 2018). Such studies have insisted on an ethnographic focus on micro-level urban practices for detecting the contingent emergence of forms of order that "impose their own spatial and temporal logic on the city" (De Boeck 2012). It is the tension between individual practices of adaptation and improvisation, and the enabling forms of social collectivity that produces the "deep relationality" (Simone 2018: 65) constitutive to the urban order.

Similarly, this research comprehends valuation work not as isolated or contained 'individual practices' but rather analyses what it terms '*collective enactments'*. By connecting situated urban processes of valuation work, such collective enactments draw attention to the relational nature of market-making, while simultaneously bringing an analysis of precise economic practices to the above-mentioned approaches of thinking the urban as constituted through shifting socio-material relations. Analysing

valuation work as an integral part of wider collective economic processes and structures has two main implications: first, it positions valuation work as always-specific expert practice that is variably enabled or constrained by different forms of social organisation structuring such occupations. This shifts attention from capacities of adaptation and improvisation – often prevalent in the above-mentioned literature – to inter-generational trader lineages, urban kinship configurations, or specific occupational identities that structure valuation work in the urban fripe economy. Second, situating such processes in the evolving "field of power" of the market (Çalışkan 2010: 202) highlights the hierarchies and often-contested micro-politics of valuation that determine opportunities for market-making in the urban fripe economy. Distinct "power geometries" (Massey 1991: 28) thus create differentiated opportunities for participating in valuation work and shape the collective enactments of the fripe economy in urban space.

c. Tunis and the fripe as urban economy

Linking diverse sites and actors of *valuation work* by examining the fripe's *collective enactment* in urban space deliberately connects processes of market- and space-making in the urban fripe economy. Beyond the situated transformations that come to the fore through an examination of fripe valuation work in particular urban locations, collective enactments highlight the economy's wider role in structuring urban space, generating patterns and temporalities of circulation that render visible interrelated urban geographies of *fripisation* in contemporary Tunis. Through a close-up analysis of such collective enactments of valuation work in urban space, this research examines the singular articulations of the fripe as urban economy. The economic and demographic primacy of Tunis and its historical role as a hub of the fripe economy provide the rationale for focusing on this particular city, without however approaching it as a neatly circumscribed 'field site' or administratively defined spatial container. Rather, by drawing upon scholarship that has stressed the ever-evolving contours of the city, this account extends the typical focus on housing in studying urban transformation in Tunis, centring instead on the role of a particular economy in co-producing on-going processes of change.

Tunisian geographers have long underlined the capital city's primacy in both demographic and economic terms (Belhedi 2004: 2). Structural inequalities between Tunisia's industrialised coastal regions and its predominantly rural interior – theorised as a "spatial divide" – were exacerbated due to French colonial planning and investment decisions (ibid 2004, 2012). The disproportionate channelling of funds into the development of the capital city as the centre of political and economic power and home to the majority of French "*colons"* (settlers) (Signoles et al. 1980) consolidated the primacy of Tunis. Combined with mass expropriations of agricultural land, this accelerated migration to the capital city from the 1930s onwards (Mejri 2004), a trend that continued unabated until the 1970s (Miossec 1985; Signoles 1987). Counting 540,000 inhabitants at independence in 1956, Tunis grew to 1.4 million in 1984 (Lafi 2017: 51), with largely informal urban sprawl transforming the compact city into an urbanising, metropolitan region (Stambouli 1996). Today, the four governorates and 34 municipalities that form Greater Tunis[16] count more than 2.5 million inhabitants, and over 30% of Tunisia's total population are concentrated in the Tunis metropolitan area that incorporates two rings of peri-urban settlements and a first ring of secondary cities (Dlala 2011).

This demographic and economic primacy explains why, from the onset of commercial fripe imports in 1964, over 50% of all imports were distributed in the capital city, with the second largest city Sfax receiving only 10% (Van Groen and Lozer 1976: 6). As a direct consequence of this distribution policy,

[16] Greater Tunis, in Fr. "*Grand Tunis*", in Ar. "*Tounis al-Koubra*" is the term used to refer to the metropolitan area of the capital city, but does not designate an instance of metropolitan governance;

wholesalers began to cluster in Tunis from the 1960s onwards and the first sizable, permanent fripe markets emerged in the capital city. While new legislation adopted in 1995 sought to distribute import, wholesale and retail licenses evenly across the national territory, this never reversed the concentration of the fripe economy in and around the capital city. Especially the pre-eminence of the Tunis container port *Rades* – today the only official import location for fripe in Tunisia – prompted the location of sorting factories on the capital city's peripheries. Until the present day, the largest fripe wholesale hub of Tunisia is located in the centre of Tunis and attracts traders from across the country, as well as from neighbouring Algeria. Finally, the unparalleled differentiation of fripe retail spaces in Tunis – with a diverse array of markets and shops catering to different income groups and specialised in different products – attracts customers from far beyond the capital city.

Scholarship on the Tunisian capital city provided a crucial knowledge base for constructing this account of the fripe economy as agent of urban change. In the absence of research on the fripe[17], and the scarcity of scholarly work on urban markets or economies in Tunisia more broadly, research on urban history and development constituted a central pillar for developing this account of the fripe as 'urban economy'. Tunisian and, to a lesser extent, French scholarship on urban history (e.g. Ammar 2017; El Ghali 2010; Ferjani 2017; Sebag 1998), housing policies and informal settlements (e.g. Chabbi 1986, 2012; Legros 2003; Miossec 1988; Tayachi 1988), and rural-urban migration (e.g. Sethom 1995; Signoles 1987) provided an important backdrop for tracing the fripe's distinct socio-spatial histories in the capital city. In addition, research on contemporary metropolitan growth (e.g. Taleb 2018; Zerai 2019), real estate development and speculation (e.g. Barthel 2008; Barthel and Signoles 2006; Ben Othman 2009(a), 2011; Ben Jalloul 2017), and changing uses of urban public space (e.g. Ben Othman 2009(b); Sebastiani and Turki 2016) embedded the analysis of contemporary processes of *fripisation*, drawing attention to shifting notions of 'centre' and 'periphery' or blurred boundaries between the 'urban' and the 'rural' which the fripe economy co-produces in Tunis. Finally, research on particular urban districts enhanced this thesis' engagement with localised urban transformations caused by the fripe trade, providing insight into the urban policies, renewal or development projects, or changing socio-cultural dynamics that allowed different market-makers to invest and reshape such urban spaces (e.g. Abdelkafi 1986, Ben Medien 2003, Berry-Chikhaoui 1994).

[17] At the time of writing, the only available research on the fripe in Tunisia comprised a 1976 survey of the fripe sector (Van Groen and Lozer), a case study of a fripe migrant entrepreneur (Boubakri 2002), and a recent book chapter on young men's working lives in the fripe (Gruntz 2019); Library searches in public universities in Tunis, Sfax and Sousse, as well as interviews with Tunisian scholars (see Appendix I., Interview 9-15) complemented my search for existing sources on the fripe in Tunisia;

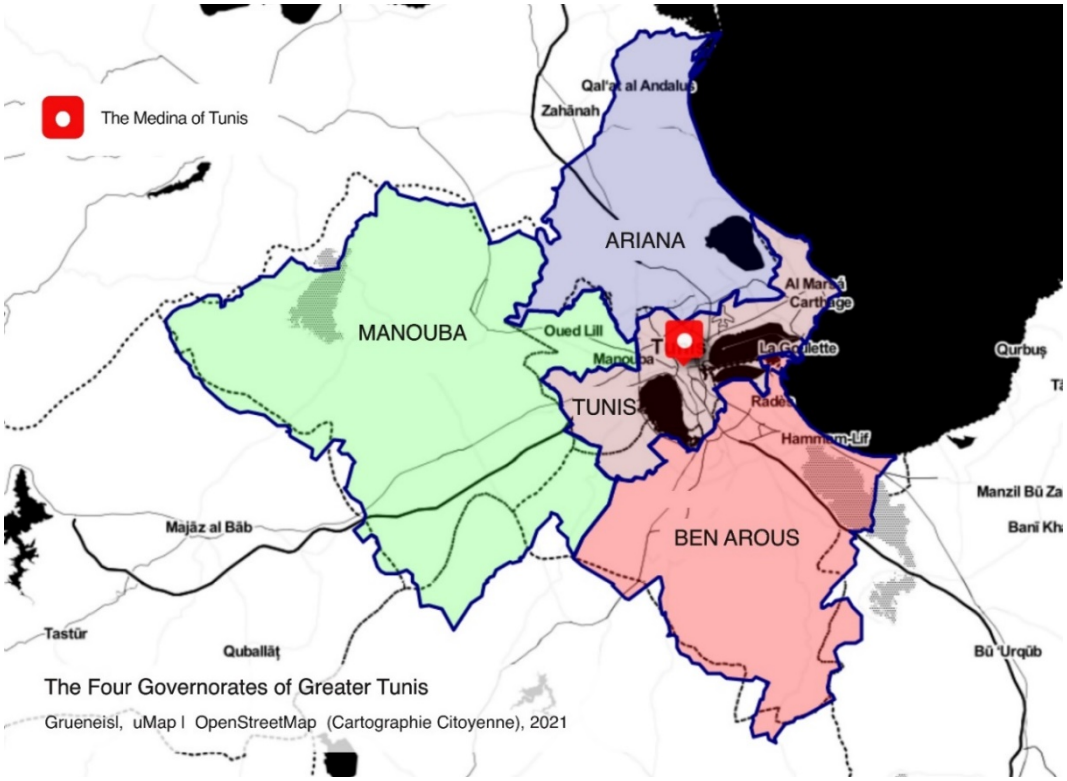

Figure I.1 Greater Tunis and the location of the Tunis medina (historic old city)

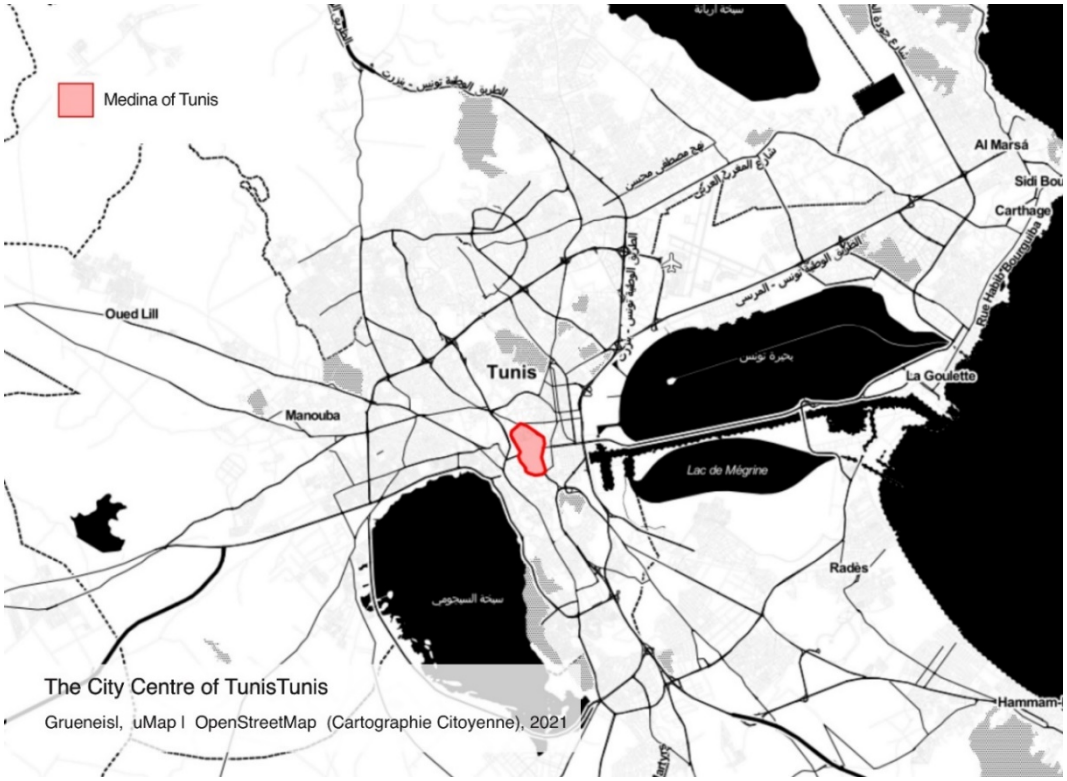

Figure I.2 The city centre of Tunis and the perimeters of the medina

4. The structure of the thesis

To investigate the fripe's constitution as singular urban economy in Tunis, this thesis sets out to answer the three questions posed at the beginning of this introduction: in short, it examines the fripe's constitution as distinct and evolving commodity form; its consolidation – and yet contested positioning – as a formally delimited sector of the economy and a particular urban market form; and the processes that underpin the fripe's prominent role in co-producing urban change in contemporary Tunis. In order to do so, this thesis is structured in two main parts, with each bringing different methods and perspectives to understanding the fripe as a singular urban economy. This thesis is based on ethnographic research conducted primarily in two main phases, between June and December 2017, and between April 2018 and March 2019. This was complemented with regular follow-up visits to particular archive spaces, research sites and key interlocutors in 2019 and 2020. The two parts of this thesis feature separate introductions, giving space to an in-depth reflection on the mechanisms of knowledge production – and their conceptual and political implications – that underpin this account. The structure of this thesis thus not only reflects an insistence on attending to historically consolidated political and spatial structures for comprehending a contemporary urban economy; it also refuses to bracket methodological choices from the arguments constructed, careful to avoid a usage of the term "ethnography" that risks "casting a shroud over research practices, spiriting them away from the presented analysis and allowing them to escape any scrutiny" (Hitchings and Latham 2020: 978).

The first part of this thesis consists of two chapters (I + II), which examine the historical trajectories that position the fripe on the apparent margins of both the formal economy and the contemporary urban order. Through an investigation into the fripe's political economy and socio-spatial histories in post-independence Tunis, the two chapters challenge the fripe's performative constitution as ahistorical 'black box' by providing detailed insight into its contingent development as both economic and urban realm. They also unpack the distinct motives and politics that have underpinned the fripe's positioning as an ambiguous grey space, deprived of full incorporation into the economy and planned urban order, while simultaneously remaining entangled with diverse modes of governing and urban co-production. The second part consists of three chapters (III + IV + V), which explore the fripe's contemporary, processual enactment as 'urban economy'. Setting out from the unstable commodity status of the fripe, the three chapters investigate *collective enactments* of *valuation work* in Tunis, providing insight into market-making as spatial and relational process. Valuation work is therefore examined as constitutive to both situated urban transformations – often captured with the vernacular term *fripisation* – and to socio-material circulations that set into relation distant actors and locations, producing urban space relationally.

a. Tracing the fripe's historical constitution as contested urban economy

The first part of this thesis provides two distinct perspectives on the fripe's historical constitution as a contested 'urban economy', interrogating the systems of differentiation that continue to partially exclude it from 'the economy' and the contemporary 'urban order' in Tunis: the first chapter offers an investigation of the fripe's political economy in post-independence Tunisia, and the second chapter writes urban counter-histories of the fripe trade as a realm of city-making in the capital.

Chapter I constructs a political economy of the fripe as 'black box', investigating three critical conjunctures in Tunisia's post-independence history that provide insight into the fripe's – always partial – incorporation into 'the economy' and formal systems of governance. Emphasis lies on the role of

different political regimes and state actors in establishing and delimiting the fripe as "*qitaa"* (formal economic sector), while simultaneously producing forms of exclusion that perpetuated framings of the fripe as 'ungovernable' or 'illicit' economy. This chapter analyses how diverse "processes of framing" (Callon 1998: 17) – allegedly designed to neatly delimit 'the economy' as separately existing and measurable sphere – in fact represented performative acts of imperfect delimitation that consistently positioned the fripe between the 'formal' and the 'informal'. Such blurry and permanently contested delimitations of the fripe as economy were key to open up opportunities for both direct state intervention and indirect modes of state participation in the economy over time. This provides an understanding of the state as a dispersed and evolving actor not only in the constitution of the fripe economy, but also in on-going processes of market-making in which the state intervenes at different levels and in diverse formal and informal capacities.

Chapter II traces counter-histories of the fripe trade as a realm of city-making by rewriting the history of two flagship urban renewal projects in post-independence Tunis. It examines two centrally located Tunis neighbourhoods that featured large-scale urban renewal and development operations post-independence, and have today become consolidated as hubs for fripe retail and wholesale activities. Officially, the fripe trade's long-standing presence at the heart of both former renewal sites remains unaccounted for. Drawing on the life histories of fripe traders whose trajectories of rural-urban migration and livelihood-building in the capital intersected with the history of the two flagship projects, the chapter recounts the auto-construction and gradual consolidation of fripe markets at the core of the urban development sites. Tracing the mechanisms of partial incorporation and pragmatic co-production that gradually turned the fripe traders from illegitimate encroachers into project stakeholders, these counter-histories reposition an allegedly marginal urban trade and its 'rural' migrant constituencies as central to the making of the modern urban order. In doing so, this account contests linear narratives of post-independence modernisation as a quest against the "ruralisation" of Tunis (Berry-Chikhaoui 1994: 238), but also challenges contemporary framings of *fripisation* as an ephemeral or ahistorical process of encroachment.

b. The fripe's contemporary enactment as singular 'urban economy'

The second part of this thesis centres on valuation work and its collective enactments as an empirical entry point to understanding the co-production of the urban and the economic that comes to the fore through contemporary processes of *fripisation* in Tunis. Three chapters structure the investigation into market-making in the fripe as relational and spatial process, each of which examines a particular collective enactment of valuation work in present-day Tunis. Just as these collective enactments render visible diverse and entangled market-making agencies across contemporary Tunis, they also show how market-making co-constitutes urban space, beyond common understandings of *fripisation* as informal market proliferation in the Tunis inner-city.

Chapter III explores distributed processes of valuation work around fripe shoes, a commodity that is nominally banned from circulation on the Tunisian domestic market but is in fact widely traded and represents one of the most sought-after and expensive fripe items in Tunis marketplaces. While the chapter provides an analysis of the situated valuation work accomplished with fripe shoes in three key sites of the contemporary urban fripe economy, it also examines the multiple circulations – of merchandise, credit, cash, people or information – that connect these urban locations and actors of valuation work. Beyond a careful analysis of the localised urban transformations that occur in sites of fripe shoe valuation, the chapter thus sheds light on the webs of relations that come to the fore through

a close-up examination of fripe shoe valuation. Honing in on a nominally 'illicit commodity' renders particularly apparent the diverse forms of state participation in the contingent mechanisms of movement and stoppage that structure unequal opportunities for value extraction from fripe shoe circulations in present-day Tunis.

Chapter IV then investigates the collective enactment of a formerly residential street in central Tunis as a specialised fripe marketplace, and thus as a site for valuation work with diverse fripe objects. Empirical emphasis lies on the agency of diverse fripe traders in devising synchronised mechanisms of circulation that enabled the street's rapid *fripisation,* or transformation into a densely occupied market. Setting out from a close-up analysis of the patterns of coordination that became consolidated in distinct market forms, the chapter explores why processes of *fripisation* remain nevertheless on-going, with periodic shifts in density and market proliferation constituting the marketplace as a spatial entity in process. By honing in on the routinised practices of boundary making and boundary transgression of traders with different positions in market hierarchies, this analysis provides insight into the marketplace's functioning in a complex tension between consolidation and movement. Such insights allow for a critical reconsideration of the fripe markets' long-standing definition as a problem of urban governance. Historical legacies of governing urban marketplaces through the imposition of fixed spatial enclosures are brought to bear on a contemporary relocation campaign in the street market here analysed, to illustrate the impossibility of abstracting market forms from market processes.

Chapter V focuses on the collective performance of 'bale opening' – the moment of disclosure of new fripe merchandise – in a particular Tunis marketplace. It examines how fripe vendors, market customers and a mix of curious spectators and passers-by jointly enact the marketplace as a stage for valuation work on these bi-weekly occasions. Strictly synchronised temporalities and ritualised interactions stage the bale opening as a recurrent event that is central to comprehending the appeal of fripe markets to diverse urban dwellers, not only as sites of fripe consumption but also as spaces of leisure, sociability and unexpected socio-material encounters. The temporary togetherness emerging in these ritualised events offers opportunities for 'being in public' that set the fripe apart from other urban marketplaces. The norms of collective fripe valuation not only temporarily push into the background the markers of difference that typically structure social interactions, but also offer opportunities for public appearance and participation to gender and social groups whose access to the public realm often remains restricted. In addition, the bale openings become the stage for contingent processes of cultural co-production. Inherently unpredictable encounters with heterogeneous fripe objects from 'elsewhere' become the basis for open-ended attempts of incorporation, resulting at times in the remaking of the fripe into new commodity forms and at others in failures of translation that disqualify the fripe from market exchange. In such moments of failed translation, the fripe is exposed as discard, providing the basis for the articulation of a distinct politics of fripe consumption.

Figure 2 Fripe display in front of a demolished building in central Tunis (2019)

Part One: Introduction

Histories of the present: researching a contested urban economy

The introduction to this thesis set out an approach to researching the fripe as a singular urban economy that foregrounds the multiple temporal and spatial processes that co-constitute it as an evolving realm of the contemporary city. While the term *fripisation* highlights the continuous entanglements between market- and space-making that position the fripe at the forefront of contemporary urban change processes, the urban fripe economy also consists of economic and spatial structures that have been consolidated over time. Comprehending the fripe as a present-day urban economy therefore necessitates an explicit engagement with the historical processes through which the term *al-fripe* turned from a simple designator for second-hand materials into the name for a distinct economic sector in Tunisia and of particular urban trading spaces. The two chapters forming Part One of this thesis thus address particularly the first and second research question set out in the introduction, examining the fripe's historicity as an evolving commodity form in Tunis and its inherently contested delimitation as a sector of the Tunisian economy. They also trace back the histories of market- and space-making that account for the fripe trade's prominent, and yet often unwanted, presence at the heart of the contemporary capital.

A variety of methodological challenges arose, however, in the attempt to construct historical accounts of the fripe's changing political economy and the fripe trade's role in urban change processes in Tunis. As the first section below explicates, conventional empirical points of departure for researching the fripe as evolving economic sector, and as historically constituted socio-spatial realm of Tunis, proved unsuccessful. This required a fundamental shift in research methods and a turn towards alternative historical sources and forms of historical knowledge, as discussed in the second section. The final section then examines the epistemological questions that emerged from the patchwork of methods and sources used to construct accounts of the urban fripe economy with temporal depth.

1. Encountering the fripe as 'black box'

Examining the role of the state in the fripe's constitution as economy, and investigating the distinct urban histories of the fripe trade in Tunis were two crucial starting points for my research. As the following section sets out, both of these points of departure in fact stood in contrast to, first, typical framings of second-hand economies as 'non-state economies' and, second, informal urban economies as devoid of knowable historical structures. Despite similar framings of the fripe in the Tunisian context, the next section explores why an explicit engagement with the state as actor in the economy, and an examination of the fripe trade's entanglement with processes of urban change and development was indispensable. It then discusses how I initiated research, and how both attempts resulted in an impasse, confronting me with urgent methodological questions.

a. The fripe beyond realms of official state knowledge

Prominent framings of the fripe as "*iqtisad mwazi"* (parallel economy) in Tunisia, and thus as realm of the economy that lies by definition beyond state oversight, reflect broader framings of second-hand clothes economies as informal economies: "problematic categorizations of used and discarded goods" (Gregson and Crang 2015: 161) have often resulted in high levels of mis-declarations, resulting in a

lack of reliable statistics and data required to quantify the global used garment trade. This has earned the global second-hand trade the label of a "shadow world" that "is associated with deviant economic activity that continues the long-term connection with criminality" (Brooks 2015: 72, 157). Relatedly, a focus on cross-border smuggling of used garments (Ayimpam 2014; Hernandez and Loureiro 2017; Machado and Loureiro 2015; Milgram 2008) and informal diaspora trading networks (Abimbola 2011; Kouakou 2017; Rosenfeld 2019) in scholarly work emphasises a functioning of the economy beyond state control. This mirrors tendencies to comprehend waste economies as "separate economic realms" that function outside the dominant logics of value creation in the 'formal economy' and are thus often approached as a priori "non-state economies" (Grant and Oteng 2012: 2, 3).

However, in the context of Tunisia, insight into the prominent involvement of the state in the economy precluded a framing of the fripe as a non-state or parallel economy from the outset: first, I discovered legislation and government regulation that clearly delimited the fripe as "*qitaa rasmi"* (official sector) of the economy in Tunisia, and revealed the implication of diverse state institutions – from ministries to the customs authorities and local government – in the regulation of the contemporary fripe economy. Second, my research with diverse actors in the fripe revealed the varieties of state involvement and intervention in the economy, directly contradicting the idea of the fripe as "realm distinct from state power" (Roitman 2004: 192). I therefore tried to gain access to state institutions and agencies in the beginning of my research. At first, I contacted the state bodies responsible for formal knowledge production on the Tunisian economy, and subsequently, I attempted to schedule interviews with the state institutions officially involved in the regulation of the fripe economy. Yet, both attempts were met with little success. Not only was I denied access to written materials and state institutions for direct interviews, I was also repeatedly confronted with a denial of state involvement in – or state knowledge of – the fripe economy.

I began by directing information requests for reports and data on the fripe economy to diverse state agencies habitually charged with knowledge production on the economy. When these remained unanswered, I paid direct visits to diverse formal institutions, for instance the National Consumer Agency (INC), the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT), or the Foreign Investment Promotion Agency (FIPA) in the hope of gaining direct access to information on the fripe economy through interviews. However, written data and reports were either declared unavailable or undisclosed for the fripe sector, and many institutions did not consider the fripe as lying within their organisational remit, due to its status as *iqtisad mwazi.* As a second step, I traced the responsibilities of five different state ministries, as well as branches of the local state, in regulatory oversight of the fripe economy on the basis of the 1995 framework legislation for the sector. My requests for interviews with these state institutions remained however mostly unanswered or immediately rejected, often by the receptionists of the respective state institution when I resorted to direct visits after unsuccessful phone and email contact. The few favourable answers often entailed long hours of waiting and eventually resulted in last-minute cancellations or futile meetings with public relations officials unwilling or unauthorised to refer me to more specialized staff. In the few instances where interviews actually did take place, this was either due to a misunderstanding – for instance, being mistaken as a German investor – or increasingly vague formulations of my research interests that had state actors agree to discuss the textile sector. More targeted inquiries about the fripe risked prematurely ending the conversation, or resulted in the ever-same portrayal of the fripe as 'black box' or realm evading state regulation, oversight and knowledge. Such portrayals were often contrasted to "*qitaat adiya"* (normal sectors) of the economy, most prominently "*qitaa al-nasij*" (the textile sector) which was differentiated from the fripe on the basis of its character as "*sinaa"* (productive industry) and for which an abundance of different state reports and data were readily available.

These setbacks confronted me with a methodological challenge: While state involvement in the contemporary fripe economy was clearly important and diverse state actors had delimited and shaped the fripe as 'formal sector' in Tunisia over time, state knowledge of the fripe economy seemed either unavailable or inaccessible. Consequentially, what other methods and sources could I find for researching the role and agency of the state – or rather diverse state actors – in the fripe economy in both past and present?

b. The fripe's absence from urban history

Discourses of *fripisation* prominently associate the urban fripe trade with "*fawda"* (chaos) and on-going processes of arbitrary encroachment and proliferation in the city, thus positioning fripe marketplaces as clearly 'outside', or even subversive to, the planned urban order. This mirrors portrayals of informal urban economies in diverse contexts, where "informality" automatically translates into "a perceived lack of form or structure" (Gago 2017:15). Emphasis on processes of flexible improvisation, adaptation and appropriation in scholarly work on informal markets and informal vending (Evers and Seale 2015; Racaud et al. 2018; Young 2017) has often highlighted the ephemeral and kinetic over the enduring and static. Informal urban markets have therefore often been described as "places of transient inhabitation", that generate an "accelerated space" (Mörtenböck and Mooshammer 2008: 348), reinforcing their positioning as inherently subversive – rather than constitutive – to whatever is defined as 'planned urban order'. Consequentially, few studies have explicitly engaged with the historicity of "informal" marketplaces from a perspective that opens up an understanding of their structuring role to urban space over time (Monteith 2016; 2019).

However, in the case of the urban fripe economy in Tunis, it became rapidly evident that many prominent marketplaces in the city were consolidated decades ago, with the oldest permanent markets having remained in the same spaces since the 1960s. In addition, I learnt that many of the traders had been working on the same stalls or in the same marketplace for their entire working life, and that many had passed on their business to their sons or other younger family members. This stability directly contradicted discourses of *fripisation* as ephemeral proliferation and pointed to the long and complex socio-spatial history of particular fripe marketplaces in the city. In addition, the fact that many of these fripe marketplaces were located at the very heart of the city – and indeed, on the sites of prominent post-independence urban renewal projects – went counter to the idea of fripe markets existing on the margins of the city and its planned 'modern order'. Therefore, I set out to examine the fripe's distinct socio-spatial histories in Tunis and, more specifically, its relation to urban planning in the capital city. For this purpose, I first began a systematic search for primary and secondary historical sources on the fripe trade in the city of Tunis. Second, I undertook targeted research on urban spaces where the fripe trade is today prevalent in Tunis, attempting to consult specialised public and private urban archives, as well as organisations, planners, architects, urbanists and local decision-makers who had been directly involved in or witnessed urban transformations of these particular sites or neighbourhoods. However, both avenues for research led to a dead end, confronting me with a seemingly complete absence of historical material and a general unwillingness to discuss the fripe's role in shaping the modern urban order.

Tedious procedures of formal registration and introduction marked the slow start of my search for historical sources. Once I had gained access, I searched the National Archives, the National Library, and the libraries and existing catalogues of doctoral and Master's theses of public universities in Tunis, Sousse and Sfax. Once my independent research proved unsuccessful, attempts to direct my inquiries

about the fripe directly to staff of the different institutions of knowledge production and knowledge storage were unexceptionally met with astonishment, triggering at times laughter and at times outright annoyance. Regardless of the reaction, the absence of historical sources on the fripe was then mostly affirmed without further probing or verification, and was explained to me by its status as "*tijarat al-zwawila"* (poor people's trade) that had never entered official records or been considered a subject worthy of research in its own right. Similarly, targeted investigations about the history of particular urban fripe marketplaces – for instance in private planning and architecture offices, two heritage preservation organisations in the Tunis *medina,* or an association for traditional crafts[18] – produced few tangible results. Some of my interlocutors were explicit that the fripe was not considered part of "*turath"* (heritage) or "*taqalid"* (traditions), and contrasted it with other urban crafts and noble trades – such as silk weaving or the *chechias*[19] – for which they claimed a distinct "*tarikh omrani*" (urban history) that linked them to particular urban spaces of production and trade. Others, particularly planners, urbanists and architects, proved unwilling to discuss the fripe's central presence in the midst of the urban renewal sites to which they had contributed. At best, I obtained accounts of the fripe trade as a scapegoat for the perceived failure or perversion of initial urban planning visions.

Once again, I was faced with a methodological challenge: While the fripe's contemporary ubiquity at the heart of the capital city called for an explicit engagement with its urban history and relation to planning and other processes of urban change, the fripe appeared to have "dropped out of history" (Tsing 2015: 20) in the capital. How should I go about finding alternative historical sources that could account for the fripe's ubiquitous, and yet contested, positioning in the city?

2. Alternative methods for knowing the fripe as urban economy

Responding to the challenges emerging from this first phase of research, I shifted the focus of empirical inquiry towards the diverse materials, processes and practices that co-constituted the fripe as contemporary urban economy in Tunis. This never implied losing sight of the state's role in the economy, or the fripe trade's distinct urban histories. Rather, the goal was to re-engage with the state and diverse registers of historical knowledge from a new perspective and through different channels of access. As the next two sections outline, a second phase of ethnographic research between April 2018 and March 2019 opened up new ways for investigating the state as an actor in the urban economy and for researching the multi-layered socio-spatial histories of the fripe in Tunis. First, strategies and channels for accessing informal registers of knowledge within formal institutions now took centre stage, as did engagements with the state as a dispersed actor encountered at multiple levels and in diverse capacities. Second, a "patchwork process" (Bou Akar 2018: 14) juxtaposing diverse storylines and oral and written materials now became central to piecing together accounts of the fripe as central realm of post-independence city-making.

a. Re-engaging the state as a central actor in the fripe economy

Explicit attempts to re-engage with the high-level state institutions I had sought to solicit at the beginning of my research followed after several months of intensive, ethnographic research on the

[18] Association de la Sauvegarde de la Medina (ASM), Institut National du Patrimoine (INP), Office National de l'Artisanat Tunisien (ONAT) see Appendix I, Interview 16–18;

[19] The *chechia* is the national head covering of Tunisia and its manufacture in the Tunis *medina* dates back to the 15th century;

circuits of economic activity that co-constitute the contemporary urban fripe economy of Tunis. This re-engagement was now based on numerous, external accounts of the state as complex and multi-layered actor in the fripe economy in the past and present. As a consequence, emphasis no longer lay on accessing formal knowledge on the fripe economy such as quantitative data or reports. Rather, I now sought to access diverse registers of informal knowledge within state institutions that could help to trace the role of different political regimes and state actors in delimiting the fripe as a contested realm of the economy over time. I complimented this with attempts to comprehend the various layers and capacities of involvement that rendered the state a dispersed economic actor and participant in the urban fripe economy.

In contrast to portrayals of the fripe as a non-state economy, encounters with the sector elite in the fripe had in fact opened direct access to various state ministries. Powerfully-placed fripe importers and wholesalers often established the first contact on my behalf, taking on a gatekeeper role and vouching for my good intentions. In addition to such preferential access points to high-level positions in the ministries, several strategies now helped me to gain insight into more informal registers of state knowledge. First, shifting interview locations from offices to cafes or restaurants in the surroundings of state institutions proved central to generating more informal conversations, with shared lunch breaks constituting the most favourable setting for relaxed discussions. Second, I now abstained from recording and often kept my notebook stored away until the conversation was in full swing and I was certain that my note-taking would no longer interrupt the flow of speech. Third, a switch from French – the language I had first used for engaging with state officials – to Tunisian Arabic changed both the tone of engagement and expanded the scope of conversation to personal anecdotes, inside jokes and rumours. In addition, I had learnt variably to show off or to understate my knowledge of the fripe economy: at times, feigning relative ignorance allowed for hearing 'the full narrative' of my interlocutors, often revealing their distinct positioning or the limits of their insights into the economy. At other times, demonstrating – or even exaggerating – my knowledge of the economy and its actors established a shared knowledge base that built trust and allowed for in-depth discussions. My identity as a foreign, female researcher was often helpful in arousing the curiosity of the almost exclusively male and middle-aged state interlocutors, and simultaneously signalled a status as non-threatening 'outsider' in ministries, state agencies and in the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT). At the same time, my foreign passport resulted in denied access, at times for alleged 'security reasons' as was the case in the Ministry of Interior or the Tunis container port, and at others for suspicions of being a foreign journalist, for instance in the customs authorities.

In addition to ethnographic encounters with national-level state institutions, I now investigated various forms and levels of state involvement in the urban fripe economy simultaneously. I thus met different levels of the local state in Tunis, including members of the governorate and the municipal council, that were involved in licensing procedures and in the contested governance of urban fripe marketplaces. Simultaneously, my research in fripe marketplaces, wholesale areas and sorting factories now meant that I was confronted with various branches of the state that actively participated in everyday practices and processes in the urban fripe economy. At times, I encountered the state in formal capacities of regulatory oversight or tax collection, and began interactions with municipal employees responsible for the everyday governance of specific marketplaces. At other times, I now confronted diverse state actors alongside my interlocutors in the fripe economy. Actors in the fripe economy often refer to the state as "*al-hakim*" – a term that tellingly conflates the 'government' with the 'police' and 'jurisdiction' – showing how the lines between formal and informal state action blur, with various state actors being prominently associated with tedious negotiations, illegitimate extractive practices and violence.

b. Uncovering the multiple urban histories of the fripe

Similar to re-engagements with the state during the second phase of ethnographic research, the failure to track down a written urban history – or even historical sources – on the fripe as urban economy demanded alternative methods of constructing urban histories. While the fripe remained absent from official accounts of urban development and history in Tunis, it soon revealed itself as a multi-layered realm of stories, urban legends and mythical figures. In stark contrast to contexts where the second-hand economy evokes shame and thus represents an unpopular topic of discussion (Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2011:66), the fripe proved a fruitful conversation starter with urban dwellers of diverse age groups, gender and social class in Tunis. The vast majority of urban dwellers voluntarily offered stories about the "*monde de la fripe"* (universe of the fripe), often mixed with personal anecdotes linked to particular marketplaces, curious finds or encounters. The absence of formal historical knowledge stood thus in stark contrast with innumerable, diverging storylines that brought the fripe to life as a realm of urban experiences, memories and imaginaries, in which nothing is known for certain.

These multiple and at times contradictory storylines provided new impetus for constructing particular historical accounts of the fripe as a distinct realm of market- and space-making in Tunis. The predominance of family lineages in the fripe economy – including the often-remarkable endurance of traders in particular urban locations across generations – turned into the single most important basis for constructing accounts with temporal depth. From powerfully positioned import- and wholesale dynasties to father-to-son lineages of market traders, ethnographic engagement with traders across two, and in one exceptional case across three generations, became a crucial component of this research. First, such intergenerational encounters provided insight into the fripe's evolving political economy in post-independence Tunisia, especially its shifting hierarchies and working identities. Second, targeted interviews with trader lineages that had remained anchored in the same urban location over generations became a basis for tracing back the fripe's trade's role in distinct processes of urban change.

Access to the life stories of the older generation of fripe traders drew my attention to the rural migrant origins of the vast majority of those who built livelihoods in the urban fripe trade in Tunis during the 1960s and 1970s. A more close-up and explicit engagement with such life histories required the gradual build-up of trust, and only after months – and in two cases, a year – of regular engagement did I dare to ask for permission to record the accounts of such individual trajectories. Explaining my endeavour to record such personal accounts in order to reconstruct histories of the urban fripe trade as both a realm of livelihood- and city-making in Tunis encouraged traders to participate, allowing them to tell a story that remained unknown or unrecognised. While my gender often seemed to present a disadvantage to my engagements with predominantly male interlocutors in the fripe economy, being female and relatively young in relation to the traders whoe life histories I recorded helped to open up intimate conversations, in which I was often referred to as "*binti"* (my daughter) and took on the role of a patient listener. I recorded 7 life history accounts of unequal length, with the longest one recorded over three sittings in both the market stall and private home of the trader. The accounts allowed my interlocutors to construct subjective storylines, with myself retreating to the position of periodically recentring their accounts to the precise urban sites – of market- and space-making – around which their life trajectories revolved.

Anchoring such storylines in contemporary urban spaces of the fripe economy allowed me to triangulate information and to relate subjective accounts of the past to broader processes of urban change that had reshaped space in the post-independence city. As two of the most prominent fripe markets of Tunis are located at the heart of former urban renewal projects, recorded life histories with traders enabled a

rewriting of the fripe and its constituencies into accounts of urban development. On this basis, I was then able to re-solicit particular archive spaces, as well as official stakeholders of urban development, such as planners, urbanists, architects and local decision-makers. Both the capacity to challenge framings of the fripe as ahistorical 'black box' with highly precise information, and a focus on informal access routes, produced greater success than at the start of my research. For instance, several Tunisian academics I had met and – on one occasion, worked with – now acted as gatekeepers to archive spaces, most importantly the National Archives where I was subsequently able to access un-indexed boxes. Similarly, individual stakeholders involved in the urban renewal projects I was researching helped me gain access to planning documents and evaluation reports. More importantly still, their accounts helped me fill the gaps in the official narratives of urban renewal from which the fripe trade and its constituencies remained absent. Overall, research duration was a central factor in enabling access to urban histories of the fripe: both because stakeholders in the fripe and in the urban renewal projects only revealed stories gradually with rising levels of trust, and because the careful construction of counter-histories required a piecemeal approach to adding layers of complexity with storyline after storyline.

3. Constructing a historical account of the fripe as urban economy

The different research methods and patchwork of sources that were combined to construct historical accounts of the fripe as urban economy in Chapter I and II raise a series of crucial epistemological questions. First, while these methods enable the construction of accounts with temporal depth, how do they differ from conventional 'history'-writing and what particular notion of 'temporality' or 'time' underpins them? Second, how do the methods used to research the state as an evolving actor over time influence understandings of 'the state' and 'state action', and how does this effect the political economy account Chapter I constructs? Finally, why can the accounts of urban renewal produced in Chapter II be understood as 'counter-histories' that challenge dominant epistemologies of 'the urban'?

Addressing the first question, it is necessary to acknowledge that there was no written 'history' that could have formed a starting point for this research, also implying no standard 'periodisation' nor 'chronology' of the fripe that could have structured the inquiry. The goal of this research was never to construct an untold 'history of the fripe' that would start from some pre-determined origin point in the past. Rather, it aimed to build a history, or rather histories, of the present, thus adopting a genealogical approach. Consequentially, the attempt to gain an understanding of the urban fripe economy with temporal depth was here initiated by a problem posed in the present, namely the fripe's prominent, and yet contested positioning as both 'economy' and 'urban presence' in contemporary Tunis. To do this, an "archaeological method" (Krarup 2021: 19) that pieced together different historical sources and knowledge to enable a comprehension of the fripe's present-day positioning as urban economy took centre stage. This included ethnographic encounters and oral accounts in an approach to "history as human story-telling practice" (Tsing 2015: 168) that is always subjective, often characterised by intentional or unintentional lacunae, and must be understood in the context of the particular spaces and situations in which it is recounted, recorded or written. Both chapters follow the archaeologist's method of using particular finds or elements for making connections and assembling a larger storyline, while remaining aware of the performative act of construction that underpins the final accounts. Confronted with multiple, and at times contradictory, storylines, my goal was not simply to triangulate them to discern verifiable 'facts'. Rather, the interpretation of my interlocutors' accounts as multiple, performative acts of constructing histories revealed crucial information about the dominant narratives

and epistemologies that order understandings of the past and present and thus co-determine the fripe's present-day positioning as contested urban economy.

Concerning narration and history then, both chapters explicitly abstain from marking any type of origin story. Multiple other alternative beginnings – and endings – could have been chosen to construct accounts of both the fripe's political economy and its urban histories in Tunis. The intention is not to strive for completeness or linearity, but instead to use distinct temporal conjunctures and particular urban spaces to comprehend change processes over time. While the phrase "post-independence" is adopted in the following two chapters to refer to the overall temporal scope of the accounts, this does not imply a simplified understanding of the moment of Tunisian independence in 1956 as a neat rupture. On the contrary, this research emphasises how colonial legacies of both economic governance and urban planning lie at the heart of comprehending the fripe's political economy and positioning in the capital city post-independence. This research is also aware of the important pre-colonial and colonial histories of *ruba fikia* trade that could have been narrated. The temporal focus on "post-independence" Tunisia and Tunis in the following accounts is thus, first and foremost, a pragmatic choice that reflects the importance of oral sources – and especially contemporary witnesses – for constructing these histories. In addition, the onset of large-scale imports of civilian used clothing during the first decade after independence marks an important moment of change that can be used as a form of beginning for the accounts here constructed. Unprecedented amounts of commercial fripe imports during the 1960s posed both a question of governance to the newly independent Tunisian state and led to a proliferation of fripe trading in the capital, coinciding with the 'era of the plan' when Tunis was reshaped by large-scale urban renewal.

Regarding the second question, the methods used to examine the evolving government of the fripe as realm of the Tunisian economy foreground a particular epistemology of 'the state'. The deliberate engagement with informal registers of state knowledge that underpins this research emphasises the performativity of governing, demonstrating the co-existence of diverse – official and unofficial – discursive state practices in the fripe economy. This draws attention to performative processes of inclusion and exclusion that shifted the remit of the state's responsibility and knowledge over time, delimiting the fripe variably as formal sector of the economy or as parallel economic realm and 'black box'. In addition, encounters with the state at different levels and in highly different capacities and roles in the fripe economy necessitate an understanding of the state as a dispersed and non-unitary actor (Sharma and Gupta 2006) operating through a wide register of interventions in the fripe economy, spanning law-making to direct extractive practices. This informs the understanding of the state as an actor in the contemporary urban fripe economy (expanded upon in Part Two) and influences the account of the fripe's post-independence political economy constructed in Chapter I: drawing upon "genealogical approaches" that refute "the certitudes of given categories" (Gidwani 2008: xvii), 'the state' and 'the economy' are considered to be constituted in-process, with multiple entanglements, but also performances of alterity, periodically collapsing or enacting boundaries between them.

Concerning the third question, the methods used to construct an account of the fripe trade and its social constituencies as agents of urban renewal in Chapter II reveal 'counter-histories' of urban transformation in post-independence Tunis. Examining two prominent urban renewal sites that inadvertently turned into major fripe trading centres, the histories Chapter II traces run counter to the official discourses of post-independence planning and modernisation in Tunis. Methodologically, the focus on individual life trajectories of fripe traders becomes a mechanism for reading such subjective, oral accounts against written project documentation, planning discourses and archival material. In doing so, these counter-histories confer central agency to rural migrant constituencies in the fripe trade that

not only remain absent from historical accounts, but also continue to be positioned outside the recognised 'urban order'. The comparison and confrontation of such diverse forms of data for rewriting the histories of two particular urban sites thus counters normative categories of "progress" and "order" underpinning habitual epistemologies of "urban planning" (Bou Akar 2018: 4). Rather, the counter-histories here constructed demonstrate how official processes of city-making strategically incorporated the alleged margins to produce urban change. The empirical focus on two particular marketplaces enables the anchoring of critiques of dominant accounts of urban transformation in precise locations. In doing so, the counter-histories unsettle the dualisms between planned and unplanned space, and official city-makers and encroachers, that continue to define the fripe trade as subversive, rather than constitutive, to urban space.

Figure 3　Discarded fripe materials behind a Tunis sorting factory (2017)

Chapter I

Constructing a political economy of the fripe as 'black box'

In December 2017, Chokri Chniti, a well-known fripe importer and sorting factory owner, was arrested at Tunis airport for suspected money laundering and illicit import activities, as part of the "anti-corruption campaign" of Tunisia's then-prime minister Youssef Chahed (*Le Temps* 2018). This high-level arrest – reported in all mainstream media – was followed by the closure of Chokri Chniti's large fripe sorting factory in *Mornaguia,* on the peripheries of Tunis in January 2018. The mostly female factory workers subsequently staged a sit-in at the factory gates, protesting the sudden closure of the factory by the "*diwana"* (customs) and the loss of their last quarter wages. Simultaneously, the customs authorities raided different warehouses linked to Chokri Chniti's fripe distribution business in *Zahrouni,* the main fripe wholesale quarter of Tunis, while fires in larger, unofficial warehouses across the Western peripheries of the capital city pre-empted similar raids. As an official charged with the 'fripe file' in the Ministry of Industry commented during a lunch break some months after the incidents, "when you see fires, you know there is a confrontation between "*al-dawla"* (the state) and the mafia of the fripe". And after a short silence he added: "What I oversee as "*qitaa al-fripe"* (the fripe sector) has nothing to do with the "*monde de la fripe"* (world of the fripe) out there, these are two completely different things".

This chapter foregrounds such persistent contradictions, between the fripe as formally delimited economic sector and the fripe as a 'black box', a realm beyond state knowledge and oversight. It investigates the agency of the Tunisian post-independence state – or rather, the diverse political power configurations dominating the state at different times – in bringing into existence, and shaping the specific contours of the Tunisian fripe economy over time. In doing this, the chapter deliberately opens the 'black box' of the fripe to demonstrate its distinct *political economy* in post-independence Tunisia. By constructing the fripe as an object of political economy, the state's agency in constituting a realm from which it remains nominally 'absent' is illustrated, drawing attention to the performativity of state governance and, more specifically, to the performative acts of delimiting the economy (Callon 1998; Mitchell 2008). Emphasis is placed on state practices of "enframing", or the performative production of differentiations between 'inside' and 'outside' that are "constitutive to power" (Mitchell 1988: 44). Shifting acts of delimitation show how the state – at times accidentally, but often deliberately – positioned the fripe outside of 'the economy', precluding full incorporation and thus perpetuating its status as 'black box'. While this performatively constituted the fripe as 'ungovernable', it in fact opened up diverse opportunities for state intervention and participation in the economy.

Constructing a political economy of the fripe therefore necessarily focuses on the evolving *systems of differentiation* through which the fripe was included or excluded from the realm of 'the national economy'. To understand the fripe as a contested realm of the present-day economy, it is necessary to ask how the state defined 'the fripe' at particular points in time, requiring a methodological approach that combines multiple written and oral sources for tracing critical *conjunctures*, rather than discrete origins. The chapter comprises three specific conjunctures, each of which provide particular insight into different forms of state agency in constituting the fripe as a contested realm of the present-day 'economy'. These three conjunctures can be roughly situated in the three main phases through which post-independence governance in Tunisia is normally recounted: First, the paternalistic authoritarian regime of independent Tunisia's first president Habib Bourguiba (1956–1987); second, the authoritarian regime of his successor Zine Ben Abidine Ben Ali (1987–2011); and finally, the period of democratic transition that followed the 2011 Tunisian revolution, also denominated the 'Jasmine revolution' or known as the beginning of the 'Arab spring'. However, rather than constructing a chronology of state-

economy relations that merely reproduces such periodisation, each conjuncture asks how the state defined the fripe at different points in time: as an object oscillating between charity and commodity, but also as a realm of commerce, and later, as a formally regulated sector of the economy. Emphasis lies on variegated state practices of performative delimitation – from law-making, to selective political incorporation and sector reform – through which particular objects, actors and practices of the fripe were selectively included or excluded from the realm of formal state knowledge and governing.

By examining the state's role in strategically delimiting the fripe as an economic sector, the chapter demonstrates how the state is itself a shifting power configuration, in search of possibilities for economic and political gain-making through variably defining the fripe as either a 'problem space' to be repressively governed or a 'field of opportunity' to be cultivated. The shifting systems of differentiation shaping the fripe economy over time altered possibilities for state agency in the economy, opening up diverse modes of – formal and informal – governing. The alleged 'non-governance' of the fripe is thus repositioned as a particular mechanism in the exercise of state power. The next section briefly situates the three conjunctures here analysed historically, and reflects on the opportunities and limitations that arise from a genealogical inquiry as basis for constructing a political economy. The following section then revisits the onset of large-scale fripe imports to Tunisia in the aftermath of WWII to examine how the ambiguous status of the fripe between charity and commercial good established from early on a system of partial incorporation that opened up opportunities for political leverage and economic rent-extraction. This provides a crucial backdrop for the subsequent analysis of three post-independence conjunctures, namely the beginning of commercial fripe imports from the United States in 1962, the adoption of framework legislation for the fripe sector in 1995, and a period of failed reform attempts between 2014 and 2018.

1. Tracing state agency in the ambiguous delimitation of the fripe as 'economy'

In the absence of any unequivocal origin story or history of the fripe in Tunisia, this inquiry has no chronology or temporal frame from which to depart, nor an archive of formal knowledge on how the fripe was defined by the state at different points in time. As the object of inquiry thus remains uncertain, a genealogical approach to constructing this political economy of the fripe as 'black box' is necessary that foregrounds, rather than obfuscates, epistemological and methodological uncertainties. Epistemologically, the specific actors, practices and processes constituting the political economy of the fripe in post-independence Tunisia are up for question. Methodologically, collecting information on a realm of the economy that has been deliberately excluded from systematic knowledge production or has been framed as opaque poses particular challenges.

Standard accounts of Tunisia's political economy are habitually structured into neatly separable phases, each associated with a dominant economic policy and often a central political figure: state socialism during the 1960s, associated with Ahmed Ben Salah; economic liberalisation beginning with the term of prime minister Hédi Nouira in 1970; and neoliberal reform under president Ben Ali often dated to the beginning of structural adjustment policies in 1986. Such classical political economy analysis thus tends to construct a narrative in which both 'the state' and 'the economy' remain relatively stable units of analysis (Anderson 1986; Bellin 2002; Murphy 1999). In discussions of Tunisia's post-independence regimes, the state is often moreover equated to "the authoritarian regime" as a unitary actor controlling all power and decision-making (Camau and Geisser 2003). As a consequence, the actual workings of state power in economy and society have often remained "exogenous" to political economy analysis in Tunisia (Hibou 2005: 9).

The most sustained scholarly critique of such conventional political economy analysis of Tunisia has originated in ethnographic research along Tunisia's Southern and Western borders over the past two decades (Boubakri 2001; Doron 2018; Gallien 2019; Meddeb 2012; Saadaoui 2018). Disputing official narratives of 'state absence' in Tunisia's borderlands, this scholarship systematically demonstrates the intricate regulatory systems through which different state actors participated in the constitution of allegedly 'illicit' border economies in Tunisia from the 1980s onwards. By constructing this 'political economy of the margins' – both geographically marginal and at the margins of legality – such accounts inform this political economy of the fripe. They similarly foreground a more complex understanding of the state as both formal and informal economic actor, enmeshed at multiple scales in processes and practices that are performatively positioned beyond the reach of the state.

Rather than merely countering narratives of state absence on the margins however, this research emphasises the systems of differentiation – similar to Mitchell's (1988: 44) notion of "enframing" – through which the state defines shifting notions of legibility and illegibility, here in a specific realm of 'the economy'. In addition to Mitchell's emphasis on the importance of legible forms of order for the exercise of government – or more specifically, colonial control – this account also draws upon writing that has highlighted the "sustained illegibility" of the state as a deliberate strategy of governing (Das 2004: 231). The "margins" are thus approached as important "sites of practice", revelatory of the state's diverse "modes of order" (Das and Poole 2004: 8) and capable of expanding the range of actors, processes and overlapping temporalities than can be taken into account in constructing a political economy. Writing the political economy of the fripe as supposed 'black box' thus constitutes a performative act: first, it counters framings of "informality" that situate the bulk of contemporary economic activities in Tunisia beyond formal state knowledge (Gallien 2018:4), investigating the fripe instead as a sphere of contested governance that is worthy of inquiry in its own right. Second, it opens a different perspective on political agency, exposing the state's politics of performative delimitation and placing it at the heart of a political economy analysis.

The epistemological questions arising from this political economy of the fripe are also accompanied by methodological challenges. This account relies on a multiplicity of written and oral sources – from archival material, to legislation and interim ministerial reports, to interviews with diverse state and non-state actors. As discussed in the introduction to this first part of the thesis, informal registers of state knowledge were crucial to building this account. In addition to filling gaps in official knowledge, conversations with diverse state actors added layers of meaning to seemingly conventional repertoires of state practice, bringing into view habitually disregarded or invisible mechanisms of governing. Both formal and informal state practices, from law-making to economic extraction, can thus be considered side-by-side to examine the performative delimitation of the fripe as economy over time. Finally, although explicitly interrogating the state's role in constituting an allegedly non-state economy, the state cannot be understood as clearly separable from the complex and often highly personalised networks that constitute the fripe as what Peraldi terms "*une économie des acteurs*"[20] (2018: 9). Therefore, interviews with non-state actors in the fripe economy provided an important additional viewpoint on the changing contours and effects of state action. The ethnographic engagement with family lineages of fripe importers and wholesalers in particular made apparent how the state was encountered in different capacities and functions in the fripe economy over generations, from law enforcer, to economic investor, or rent extractor.

[20] Meaning an economy structured predominantly by social networks, rather than formal state regulation;

The political economy constructed through this genealogical inquiry exists as a response to a specific problem in the present: how it is that the state presides over and indeed co-produces an allegedly 'ungovernable' sphere of the Tunisian economy. The chapter further specifies, rather than resolves, the contradiction comprising the fripe's contemporary positioning in the Tunisian economy. The account therefore unfolds through "conjuncture and contingency as components of historical time" (Tsing 2015: 168), with the three structuring conjunctures analysed as critical moments of intersection. Rather than linking the three conjunctures through a coherent narrative that traces change over time, the focus is on what each conjuncture reveals about the state's contingent role in performatively delimiting the fripe economy through evolving systems of differentiation. Therefore, each conjuncture provides distinct insight into the contingencies of state agency in the economy, unsettling both 'the state' and 'the economy' as stable units of analysis. By honing in on selective moments of governing in the fripe, shifting loci of power within and beyond the state come into focus, as do the multi-layered entanglements that blur boundaries between state- and non-state actors, or formal and informal mechanisms of governing. Although the three conjunctures each fit neatly into separate Tunisian post-independence political regimes, this analysis disputes simplistic narratives of 'regime change', highlighting instead the continuities that shaped the fripe's performative constitution as 'ungovernable sphere' over time.

Before elaborating these conjunctures, the next section returns to the onset of large-scale fripe imports to Tunisia after WWII, albeit not to provide a – certainly misleading – 'origin story'. Rather, colonial archival records from the 1940s[21] demonstrate how the fripe's ambiguous status between charity and commercial good led to the rapid formation of a flourishing 'black market', thus establishing the fripe performatively as a 'black box'. This colonial legacy is then crucial to comprehending the fripe's post-independence political economy: the first conjuncture analyses President Bourguiba's decision to encourage commercial fripe imports from 1962 onwards, positioning a small group of entrepreneurs in the privately-run import business, while instrumentalising the fripe's legacy as charity for political leverage. The second conjuncture jumps to a decade of structural adjustment policies under the Ben Ali regime, examining the 1995 framework legislation for the fripe that performatively incorporated it into Tunisia's dual market model, but in fact served as a tool for selective political incorporation and the domestic fripe sector's governing as 'parallel economy'[22]. The third conjuncture examines the failed reform process of the fripe economy in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution in Tunisia, revealing the powerful alliances within and beyond the state that perpetuate the fripe's constitution as 'black box'.

2. The military fripe as contested commodity in post-war Tunis

The onset of military fripe imports from the Allied Forces, mainly France and the United States, in 1943 resulted in the emergence of a complex system of centralised storage and subsequent distribution under the French colonial powers in Tunisia. While the fripe materials were officially reserved for charitable purposes, flourishing channels of commercial distribution rapidly constituted the fripe as "*marché noir"* (black market) during the 1940s. Based on an analysis of archival material – including detailed economic records, government communication and media articles – the following section explores how, from the beginning of their import, the ambiguous status of the fripe between charity and commercial good turned it into a subject of contestation and even national polemic. This legacy of the fripe as a contested realm

[21] Part of the colonial archives (Régence de Tunis/ Protectorat Français) in the Archives Nationales de la Tunisie (National Archives of Tunisia) Tunis;

[22] Over time, the terminologies describing the fripe's exclusion from the realm of 'the economy' varied: From "*marché noir"* (black market), to "*iqtisad mawazi"* (parallel economy) and the more recent term 'informal economy';

'outside' of the official economy is crucial to comprehend consecutive conjunctures of governing the fripe in post-independence Tunisia.

a. Military surplus and textile shortages

Reports from the 1930s suggest that by 1935, Tunisia already imported 1094 tons of used clothes and 459.3 tons of used shoes from abroad, most probably military surplus material from the First World War (Liauzu 1976: 615), as was the case in other African colonies at the time (Hansen 2000(a): 10)[23]. However, systematic records in the National Archives of Tunisia are only available from 1943, when the inventories of the French protectorate authorities begin to list "*fripe militaire"* (military fripe) imported from France and the United States. The imported military surplus included diverse kinds of machinery, furniture, tents and camp beds, but the single largest contingent consisted of used clothes and textiles. In addition to towels, bed linen or medical uniforms, most used garments were of military character and almost exclusively for men[24]. These imports were the direct result of a "surplus problem" of the Allied Forces – principally clothing overproduction of the United States – which constituted a threat to domestic market prices and a hurdle to the re-establishment of a peace-time economy. The 1940s thus saw unprecedented quantities of used garments being shipped to countries in colonial dependency, with the largest contingents arriving on the African continent (Hansen 2000(a): 63). While second-hand exports therefore fulfilled a vital economic function for the exporting countries, they were coated in a language of charity, and the military fripe in Tunisia were often labelled as "*aides américaines"* (American aid).

The "*fripe militaire"* were indeed urgently needed to tackle Tunisia's severe war-time shortages of both manufactured garments and primary materials for garment production. These shortages must be understood as a direct product of a colonial economic model[25] that had led to the demise of local textile production and had rendered Tunisia completely dependent on European imports (Croisier and Granger 1951: 1,2). In addition, restrictive economic policies of the French protectorate authorities deliberately exacerbated shortages by impeding a revival of local textile production that could have replaced European imports: harsh import restrictions for primary materials required for textile production were upheld to guarantee quasi-monopolies to a few French wholesale companies, like SOTUMATEX[26]. Even the "*resident general"* of France in Tunis complained in a 1946 letter to the Secretary-General of the Government about the intentional hurdles to imports that had exacerbated the clothing crisis in Tunisia, advocating for "locally produced garments that can meet the needs of the native population, with freedom of sales and price-setting granted to the traders"[27].

Clothing was rationed in Europe during WWII, meaning that most deliveries of military fripe to Tunisia originated in the US and were thus recorded as "*surplus américain"* (American surplus) or "*friperie américaine"* (American used clothes)[28]. While some of the military surplus made available in Tunisia

[23] Second-hand clothes turned into an export commodity during the late 19th and early 20th century, with the development of "the European commodified fashion system" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 228);
[24] Inventories of "fripe militaire", from El-Aouina and Djebel Djelloud, the only women's wear included were shoes and uniforms for nurses (Appendix III, Source 1);
[25] In fact, import dependency for cloth pre-dated French colonialism in Tunisia, with a doubling of cotton goods, woollens and silk imports from Europe through the Tunis port between 1848-1860 (Abu Lughod 1980:103);
[26] Appendix III, Source 2;
[27] Appendix III, Source 3;
[28] Appendix III, Source 4;

was simply left behind by the departing Allied forces, the majority was imported on cargo ships through dedicated government agencies in charge of managing surplus in America and France[29].

b. Charitable distribution or commercial good?

In theory, all military fripe were to be distributed to people in need through charitable or religious associations and various state enterprises and public institutions. While the "*fripe militaire"* was thus clearly defined as charity, parallel channels of commercial distribution in fact emerged as early as 1943, implicating state actors in the gradual emergence of a flourishing for-profit business with second-hand clothes.

Officially, charitable fripe distribution in Tunisia was administered through the highly bureaucratic system of war-time rationing and provisioning that had been put in place by the protectorate authorities. Accordingly, the import and distribution of military fripe materials was overseen by the "*direction de l'économie générale*" (central economic administration) which strictly regulated all imports and exports to and from Tunisia and held central control over most production processes and price-setting under the French protectorate. The "*ravitaillement général*" (general provisioning), which had managed supplies of food, clothing and other necessities through a system of "*bons d'achats*" (purchase vouchers) and "*tickets de rationnement*" (ration coupons) in war-time Tunisia, was now charged with distributing a part of the fripe materials. In addition, a dedicated "*office de la récupération*" (collection office) oversaw the central collection, inventories and subsequent distribution of "*fripe militaire"* to various government institutions, professional organisations and charities. From 1943, systematic records of imported surplus materials and of their distribution to public enterprises, state institutions and non-governmental associations testify to the central role of these state institutions in managing supplies and distribution [30].

As diverse letters from the 1940s demonstrate, the clear priority of the American and French surplus agencies was the rapid disposal of fripe materials on the Tunisian market to protect their economies in the transition to peace-time. The end recipients of the alleged aid deliveries in Tunisia were thus of minor importance and the rapid emergence of commercial channels of distribution were of no major concern to the American or French authorities. At the same time, the French colonial administration in Tunisia became actively involved in both the charitable – and parallel, commercial – distribution of military fripe, a process that was politically contested from the outset. Countless letters of complaint illustrate this, accusing government agencies of unfair treatment and favouritism in charitable distribution, or denouncing incomplete deliveries because parts of the materials had been siphoned off for commercial sale by the government agencies. Fierce competition between public companies, such as the Tunisian railway, charitable associations, as well as organisations for agricultural workers emerged over contingents of fripe clothes[31]. On numerous occasions, the "*directeur de l'économie générale*" (director of economic affairs) directly intervened to resolve conflicts, often through informal arrangements and compromise.

In addition to continuous accusations of political favouritism in official channels of charitable distribution, a flourishing commercial market for fripe products developed during the 1940s. In a context of general scarcity, the military fripe represented a desirable commercial good and government officials

[29] The National Planning Association in the United States and the "Société Nationale de Vente des Surplus" in France were charged with managing the rapid export of military surplus to avoid any damage to domestic markets;
[30] Created on the 5th of August 1943, see Appendix III, Source 5;
[31] Appendix III, Source 6;

and members of the colonial administration thus became involved in establishing lucrative, parallel distribution systems. In addition to the systematic implication of the state in "trafficking with the "*bons d'achats'*"" reserved for the poor, government documentation confirms selective state authorisations for the commercial sale of contingents of military fripe[32]. The ambiguous positioning of the fripe between charity and commercial good, combined with the confusion that reined over which contingents were authorised for commercialisation and which were destined for the needy, created an opaque sector that offered ample space for profit-sharing agreements between state officials and various private entrepreneurs. The subcontracting of private businessmen by the American surplus agency, and their direct involvement in the fripe export-import in Tunisia, further contributed to blurring the lines between charitable goods and commodities. While the fripe thus officially entered Tunisia as charitable donation, collaborations between state- and non-state actors in fact established a commercial domestic fripe market, resulting in the proliferation of military fripe in marketplaces across the country. This dual system of charitable distribution and commercial sales opened diverse opportunities of political leverage and economic gain-making by the colonial authorities and local administration.

c. The fripe as a performatively constituted 'problem space'

To conceal this systematic involvement of the state in rent extraction from charitable fripe imports, performative framings of the fripe as "*marché noir"* (black market) – and thus as realm beyond government oversight – were frequently employed by the colonial authorities. Whenever the fripe turned into the object of nationwide polemic and scandal – which happened repeatedly during the 1940s – the authorities staged a spectacular intervention that helped to portray the fripe as a 'problem space' marred by unlawful practices and corruption. Reducing government mismanagement to individual 'corruption scandals' – rather than exposing the systematic ambiguity in the governance of the fripe as both charity and commercial good – allowed the colonial authorities to uphold a performance of periodic law enforcement and oversight. Through the prosecution of individual government officials for mismanagement of fripe distribution for personal gains, the state performatively dissociated itself from a realm of commerce that had allegedly developed beyond its control.

Prominent media reporting played a central role in conjuring up such scandals, then triggering spectacular moments of state intervention: for instance, a widely mediatised "*scandale de la friperie*" (fripe scandal) in 1944 resulted in a whole series of judicial proceedings against state officials at the highest level[33]. Two officials in the central economic administration were impeached for having traded "*bons de livraison*" (delivery vouchers) for the fripe in exchange for bribes on a large scale. As the scandal directly implicated foreign businessmen and both French and local members of the administration, it created an uproar beyond Tunisia and was even reported in French and Algerian newspapers at the time[34]. Subsequent government investigations speak of "*lawlessness*" in the "ravitaillement général" and the "économie générale"[35], and these reports were followed by the temporary freezing of all fripe imports to Tunisia. Such measures never lasted however, and were merely

[32] The illegal commercialisation of fripe, the trafficking of vouchers or the disappearance of garments, as well as the "fripe scandal" are documented in numerous press articles (see Appendix III, Source 7 and 8);
[33] Ibid;
[34] Letter of Inspecteur Général du Ravitaillement Tunisien: "Cette affaire s'ébruite ; c'est ce qu'on appelle déjà, non plus seulement à Tunis, mais dans tous les pays et jusqu'en Algérie, le scandale de la friperie" (see Appendix III, Source 9);
[35] Report of Inspecteur général des services administratifs: "En bref, le premier résultat acquis par les enquêtes indique qu'une anarchie coupable règne dans le Service chargé de la répartition du Textile à l'Économie Générale" (see Appendix III, Source 10);

intended to calm the waves while allowing diverse levels of the state to perpetuate their routinised participation in the commercial fripe business.

The ambiguous status of the fripe between charitable donation and commodity therefore became the basis for a dual system of distribution that served the interests of different members of the colonial administration, local state officials and foreign and local entrepreneurs. On the one hand, turning charity into commodities produced a highly lucrative income source for the state; on the other hand, the selective distribution of fripe as charity or of purchase vouchers enabled state actors to garner political support. Opening spaces for both political power generation and economic profit-making, the fripe thus became a strategic tool for governing during the 1940s. Contestations over the commercial distribution of a charity good resulted in scandal and polemic, pushing the authorities to frame the fripe as 'black market' that had slipped out of government control. Such post-war legacies of the fripe as contested commodity are vital for understanding its post-independence political economy, and its persisting constitution as 'black box', illustrated through the three conjunctures below.

3. The American fripe as a tool of paternalistic government

The first decade of nation-building in Tunisia was characterised by an "implicit social contract" based on "economic performance and social recovery" as the basis of "state legitimacy" (Gherib 2020: 5). A form of "state corporatism" (ibid: 6) underpinned this development model, with the unitary party *Socialist Destourian Party* (PSD) [36] mediating between representatives of the general labour union, a narrow capitalist class and the political elite[37]. As the first section demonstrates, the fripe became integrated into such governing mechanisms, with the state encouraging commercial used garment imports from the United States from 1962 onward. While the importing companies were state-owned, the management of the fripe business was in fact delegated to a narrow group of private entrepreneurs who benefitted from their quasi-monopoly position. Nonetheless, the state retained regulatory oversight over fripe imports, distribution and trade, framing it as a 'strategic resource' in light of persisting clothing shortages. In particular, the attribution of fripe wholesale and retail trading licenses – on the basis of vaguely defined social criteria – turned into a tool for strengthening local branches of the post-independence party-state.

The paternalistic governance of the first president of independent Tunisia, Habib Bourguiba, was bolstered by an elaborate personality cult (Ben Achour 1987). The second section demonstrates how the fripe became incorporated into strategies of such paternalistic governance during the 1960s, with the fripe's ambiguous status between commodity and charity opening opportunities for political gain-making at zero cost to the post-independence state. Through intentionally conflating the commercial fripe imports with other 'American aid' provided by the United States to Tunisia post-independence, the fripe was systematically portrayed as a 'present of the president' and thus as a charity good despite its de-facto commercial character.

a. The fripe as a 'strategic resource' for the post-independence state

The dissolution of the "*ravitaillement général*" in 1947 marked the end of post-war rationing and of the centrally managed import and distribution of surplus materials in Tunisia. It also translated into the end

[36] The unitary party *Neo-Destour* was renamed in 1964 to signal the government's commitment to socialist ideals;
[37] For a detailed discussion of the period of "state corporatism" post-independence, see Ayari (2003: 130);

of systematic records and inventories of fripe imports to Tunisia, resulting in a gap in the archives during the 1950s. In post-independence Tunisia, the first existing records of used garment imports then point to 1962 as the beginning of large-scale, commercial fripe imports. Like elsewhere on the African continent, civilian clothing donations had now replaced military surplus materials, resulting in a more diverse and less gendered selection of used clothing arriving on container ships, particularly from the United States where surplus production was greatest (Hansen 2000(a): 11).

In Tunisia, fripe imports were fully established as commercial business during the 1960s, building on pre-existing import relations between the American East Coast and Tunisia from the post-war years. The state-owned company SOTAPEX was established in 1962 in the coastal city of Sousse to oversee the import and sorting of used clothing from the United States. While the company was set up as a public enterprise, it was in fact jointly managed as a for-profit company through an American-Tunisian private partnership. The state retained formal control over import volumes, at the time largely dispatched from New York and New Jersey harbour. Packaged in unsorted cotton bags of 100 kilo each (Van Groen and Lozer 1976: 118), the used clothes were first taken to the SOTAPEX warehouse in Sousse, repackaged into smaller bags and then distributed to wholesalers. Until the 1970s, only one other government-owned company – famously managed by the Tunisian entrepreneur family *Shamam* – imported fripe materials from the United States, conferring a quasi-monopoly position to the two importers, as well as a small group of politically-connected fripe wholesalers who cooperated closely with the Bourguiba government[38].

While the de-facto privatisation of the fripe import business freed the state from direct responsibility in managing used clothing supplies, persisting textile shortages in Tunisia and the allegedly social function of the imports became the grounds for legitimising state control over the sector. Tunisia's first government had initiated import substitution industrialisation (ISI) policies to reduce the country's heavy dependence on agriculture and to bolster its weak industrial base that rendered it highly import-dependent. While the promotion of local textile production constituted an important component of state plans for endogenous industrialisation[39], Tunisia's textile shortages were acute and the policies were going to take at least a decade to show their first effects (Dlala 1997: 87, 93). Consequently, the fripe were framed as a 'basic necessity' and thus a resource of strategic importance, justifying its direct monitoring through the central state. A state commission therefore determined the exact quantities of fripe to be distributed across the national territory every 6 months (Van Groen and Lozer 1976: 7).

More importantly still, the state retained control over fripe wholesale and retail licenses, which were to be attributed on the basis of vaguely defined 'social criteria', as a form of state assistance to the unemployed. The fripe trading licenses thus rapidly turned into a tool of political leverage that was delegated from the central state to strengthen newly created instances of decentralised state power[40] in different parts of the national territory. First, the attribution of wholesale licenses was delegated to the 24 governors of Tunisia, who were directly appointed by the president and constituted the most important representation of central state power across the national territory. Allowing the governors to decide over selective access to the fripe wholesale business, which yielded substantial profit margins during the 1960s[41], thus constituted one way of expanding the governors' power base. Second, retail licenses for fripe trading were handed out by the local cells of Bourguiba's unitary party PSD. With

[38] Appendix I, Interview 5;
[39] Outlined in the first 10-year plan for economic development, the "Perspectives Décennales de Développement", from 1962-1971;
[40] Tunisia was highly centralised, so the governorates should be defined as "deconcentrated" state power, indicating a distribution of responsibilities without delegation of power from the central government to the regions, see Belhedi (1989);
[41] Appendix I, Interview 5;

more than 1000 local party cells, the unitary party replaced institutions of local governance in post-independence Tunisia, serving both as mechanisms of political control and administering local development and state benevolence (Gherib 2020: 6). Fripe retail licenses fell under the latter category, as they were to be attributed to "the disabled, the long-term unemployed or the elderly with no children or other income sources", as one of the traders who participated in the trade during the 1960s recounted[42]. However, as the 'social criteria' for license attribution remained vaguely defined, the same trader confirmed numerous other stories attesting to license attribution as both a flourishing for-profit business and a tool of political patronage: as a now-retired importer remarked, "most of those who joined the business either had money to pay or knew someone, especially amongst the wholesalers"[43].

While fripe imports were managed as a for-profit business and provided an urgent source of affordable, civilian clothing at zero cost to the post-independence state, the fripe's ambiguous status between charity donation and commercial good also allowed the state to exploit it politically. In addition to overseeing the fripe's equitable repartition across the national territory, retaining control over the attribution of trading licenses strengthened the political leverage – and expanded the income sources – of Tunisia's governorates and local cells of the unitary party. By positioning a narrow group of politically-connected importers in a quasi-monopoly position that was only selectively expanded during the 1970s, President Bourguiba meanwhile produced a class of entrepreneurs, often called "*les barons de la fripe*", whose family lineages dominate parts of the fripe economy to the present day.

b. The fripe's discursive constitution as 'president's present to the people'

The discursive framing of the fripe as 'charity good' was meanwhile used to symbolically incorporate it into the personality cult of Bourguiba as benevolent 'father of the nation'. A fictitious narrative of the fripe as "president's present to the people" intentionally conflated the used clothes with American aid delivered to Tunisia during the 1960s and turned the fripe into a central tool of paternalistic governance. As its status as commercial good was simultaneously extended, the fripe became a powerful tool of the post-independence state for garnering popular support at minimal cost.

When prompted to explain the origins of the fripe, especially elderly fripe traders in Tunis marketplaces often recount how "*al-zaim Bourguiba"* (the leader Bourguiba) – as he often continues to be referred to respectfully – travelled to America to ask for assistance "for the Tunisian people" and brought back the fripe as "a present*"*[44]. This fictitious narrative originated during the 1960s, and was intentionally cultivated in order to incorporate the fripe symbolically into a broader discourse portraying Bourguiba as benevolent provider to the nation. The narrative not only obfuscated the fripe's colonial legacies in Tunisia and falsely credited Bourguiba with having brought the fripe from the United States, it also intentionally framed the fripe as 'charity good', glossing over its factual status as commercial good in post-independence Tunisia.

The fabrication of this narrative was bolstered by the fripe's systematic conflation with American aid deliveries to Tunisia during the 1960s. The so-called "*musaadat amrikaniya"* (American aid deliveries) arrived in Tunisia from the year of independence in 1956 onwards, comprising technical assistance, financial aid, and in-kind material donations to support Bourguiba's ambitious reform programme,

[42] Appendix II, Interlocutor 1 and 2;
[43] Appendix I, Interview 19;
[44] This formulation is particularly prominent in the discourses of elderly fripe traders in Tunis; it was also used in an interview with a Tunisian historian (see Appendix I, Interview 12);

particularly the expansion of health care and free schooling across the national territory[45]. Between 1956 and 1961, 239.2 million dollars of direct aid, in addition to in-kind deliveries reaching from durable food such as milk powder to clothing donations, were provided by the United States to the Tunisian government (Demerdash 2019: 126). The white cotton bags in which the American aid was distributed – habitually inscribed with "not for sale nor exchange" – became emblematic for "America's special partnership to Tunisia" and the newly independent Tunisian state as benevolent provider to its people (Rupert 1986: 138). The American origins of the fripe imports facilitated their conflation with such American aid deliveries, as did the inclusion of the fripe into government voucher systems for people in need that guaranteed supplies with basic necessities.

The government thus intentionally played on the fripe's ambiguous status between commodity and charity. The post-independence regime of Habib Bourguiba deliberately used aid deliveries and forms of social assistance for garnering popular support and the fripe's false portrayal as charity served the same political goal. The fripe thus became part of the president's image as 'father of the nation', helping to materialise plausible narratives of the president as provider in people's everyday lives. As Hansen remarked in the context of post-independence Zambia, "clothing is central to people's experiences of well-being" and the state's capacity to provide affordable clothes thus became a highly symbolic quest for young, post-independence states (Hansen 2000(a): 86). Also in Tunisia, the fripe rapidly assumed a crucial social function as both affordable consumer good and vital employment opportunity – especially for rural migrants with no other access to the urban labour market in Tunis. The rapid proliferation of fripe marketplaces – denominated "*souk Kennedy"* (Kennedy market) for their specialisation in American clothing otherwise unavailable on the Tunisia market – thus turned into visible reminders of the president's benevolent provision of both income and clothing to the poor. In addition, the distribution of trading licenses in the fripe as a form of 'social assistance' deliberately framed employment in the fripe markets as part of state charity.

Persisting evocations of the fripe as 'present of president to the people' testify to Bourguiba's successful framing of the fripe as 'charity good' during the 1960s, despite its factual transformation into a commercial commodity. While fripe imports were thus run as a private for-profit business by a narrow group of politically connected entrepreneurs, the fripe's ambiguous status between charity and commodity was used intentionally to differentiate, and thus partially exclude, it from what became delimited as normal sectors of the 'national economy'. Keeping the fripe performatively on the 'outside' of Tunisia's economy allowed the state to turn the fripe into a tool of paternalistic governance: on the one hand, the distribution of trading licenses through local branches of the state and the unitary party became a mechanism of political patronage and rent extraction that helped expand the power of the newly created state entity across its territory. On the other hand, the fripe's discursive association with foreign aid and state care turned them into a symbol of the often-evoked implicit social contract between "*al-dawla"* (the state) and "*al-mwatinin*" (the citizens), conferring to the fripe a particular political salience as a consumer good that it retains until the present day.

[45] American aid deliveries gained in importance after the suspension of French financial aid to Tunisia in 1964; aid distribution built on legacies of American food aid and clothing deliveries during the First and Second World War (Arnoulet 1984: 52), but was mainly channelled through public schools and directed to impoverished, rural areas under Bourguiba;

4. Performances of market incorporation and the fripe's constitution as 'parallel economy'

This second conjuncture begins with the adoption of framework legislation for the fripe economy, signed by then-president of Tunisia Zine Ben Abidine Ben Ali[46] on the 2nd of December 1995[47]. The 1995 law must be understood as a performative act of delimitation, defining the fripe as "*qitaa rasmi"* (official sector), and transforming it into a dual economy: nominally, the fripe sector was now divided into an export-oriented fripe sorting industry and a domestic commercial sector. While the legislation paid lip service to economic liberalisation and signalled Tunisia's inclusion into a flourishing global second-hand clothes business, the dual economy it professed to create never materialised. Instead, the law became a tool for selective political incorporation, with the partial offshore status for export-oriented import and sorting activities translating into lucrative advantages for cronies of Ben Ali's regime.

Although the fripe's transformation into a 'dual economy' never occurred in practice, the domestic fripe trade was nevertheless regulated by a series of new legal provisions from 1995 onwards, many of which directly contradicted long-established practices in the sector. The resulting mismatch between formal regulations and existing economic practices allowed for a framing of domestic fripe commerce as "*iqtisad mwazi"* (parallel economy), and thus as a realm beyond state oversight. Such framings absolved the state of direct responsibility, while ensuring continuity in the flourishing trade at a time of exacerbating socio-economic crisis. Yet simultaneously, the fripe's performative exclusion from the economy became the basis for establishing distinct mechanisms of state intervention and participation in the sector, pointing to the "highly regulated" character of what became framed as "informal economy" in Tunisia from the 1990s onwards (Meddeb 2015: 72).

a. The 'dual economy' as a tool for selective political incorporation

The rationale for law-making in 1995 lies at least in part in the six-fold growth of worldwide exports of second-hand clothing that occurred between 1980 and 1995 (Hansen 2000(a): 115). Due to sinking costs of international container shipping, and a surge in charitable clothing collection in Europe and North America that became increasingly professionalised and indirectly subsidized through tax deductions (Bhardwaj and Fairhurst 2010: 168; Bigsten and Wicks 1996: 379), exports of used garments from the Global North to the Global South grew exponentially from the mid-1980s onwards (Mangieri 2008: 15). By 1992, 100 million tons of used clothes were donated in the United States alone, more than half of which were resold in bulk to commercial export companies (Hansen 2000(a): 102). Meanwhile, Tunisian migrants in Europe had established commercial collection and export companies for used garments, with some pioneering entrepreneurs recognising the cost-saving opportunities that lay in relocating labour-intensive clothes sorting processes to Tunisia (Boubakri 2002: 8, 9). Tunisia thus became a strategic stopover location for second-hand clothes between Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa, the world's single largest export market for used garments (Brooks 2015: 145).

The 1995 legislation aimed to capitalise on this positioning, modelled on export-orientated economic growth policies first initiated under prime minister Hédi Nouira who took office in 1970 (Anderson 1986: 240). Tunisia's economy had been systematically re-organised as a "dual economy" since then,

[46] Ben Ali took power from Bourguiba in a bloodless coup in 1987;
[47] Decree n°95-916; 95-2396 of 2 December 1995, "Loi relative aux modalités d'importation, de transformation et de distribution de la friperie", published in the *Journal Officiel de la République Tunisienne*, 8 December 1995: 2258;

consisting of a separation of "offshore zones" for export-oriented production from the domestic market[48] (Kaboub 2013: 534). The 1995 law used the same mechanism, dividing the fripe sector into an export-oriented 'industrial sector' – nominally to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) – and a domestic 'commercial sector'. By defining fripe sorting and recycling as "partially export-oriented" activity, the import of fripe materials became exempt from import tax, albeit under the condition that a minimum of 30% of imported materials must be re-exported and another 20% must be recycled. Consequently, fripe import licenses were now tied to the possession of "*maamal al-farz"* (sorting factories) and as export-oriented 'offshore industries', these factories were placed under the oversight of the "*Direction Générale de la Douane"* (customs authority) and the Ministry of Industry. No overall import ceiling was specified for these sorting factories.

While the 1995 law thus upheld a façade of economic liberalisation – using the tools and language of economic restructuring that had earned Tunisia the status of a "poster child" of the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Mossallem 2015: 4) – a closer look at the law's implementation from 1995 to 1999 reveals a different reality. In fact, the legislation must primarily be understood as a tool for political incorporation, with the fictitious dual economy model providing economic advantages to a "new integrated class of entrepreneurs" that had been "incorporated into the various formal and informal circuits of the Tunisian economy" (Ben Romdhane 2011: 104) to bolster the Ben Ali regime. While existing fripe importers were incorporated into the new legal framework to prevent conflict, 38 new fripe sorting factories were licensed between 1995 and 1998, increasing the number of active sorting factories in Tunisia from 12 to 50. Only three of the factories were foreign operated, with the rest of the licenses attributed to businessmen with close connections to the Ben Ali regime or members of the regime's extended family clan[49]. For example, Hayet Ben Ali, the president's sister, became a main shareholder of a fripe factory in Sousse, and several members of the president wife's family started to run import and sorting businesses in Sidi Bouzid and Tunis. Only 4 years after the adoption of framework legislation, in 1999, the fripe sector was then declared "*saturated"* and was closed to further investment[50], effectively conferring a monopoly position to the 50 licensed importers. As was the case with alleged economic liberalisation reforms under structural adjustment elsewhere in North Africa (Mitchell 1999: 31), the Ben Ali regime thus used the fictitious dual market reform to create "*ihtikar al qitaa*" (a sector monopoly) that created unprecedented profit margins. Protective measures like the investment restrictions in the fripe sector were used systematically to cement the control of a narrow political and business elite over various sectors of the economy in Tunisia during the 1990s (Freund et al. 2014: 6, 9), but drew no major criticism from the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) overseeing structural adjustment so long as macro-economic indicators remained stable (Mitchell 2014: 484).

In addition to serving as a tool for the selective incorporation of cronies into the now-flourishing second-hand business, the fictitious dual economy reform codified the involvement of multiple state actors in the sector. While the separation between offshore activities and the domestic market was never realised in practice, the complex legal provisions that came with it allowed for the involvement of five state ministries, the customs authorities, an inter-ministerial committee, as well as the governorates, in overseeing the fripe economy. The nominal separation of the domestic and industrial sector, for instance, resulted in an ambiguous division of tasks between the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of

[48] The 1972 law n°72-38, referred to as "*loi du textile*" set the precedent by transforming export-oriented textile production into an offshore activity;

[49] Leila Trabelsi, the wife of president Ben Ali, integrated her extended family into the fripe sector and a wider system of corruption that spanned most sectors of the Tunisian economy; for a detailed discussion, see Hibou (2006: 195);

[50] This freeze was extended to purely export-oriented businesses in 2003, and the fripe sector has remained closed to new investment since;

Industry, removing parts of the sector from each ministry's orbit of responsibility. While the 1995 law thus involved new state actors in the fripe economy, it also guaranteed control of the central state over the strategic sector: Tasking "*al-wilayat"* (the governorates) with the new licensing procedures for wholesale and retail, the law retained the direct link between the presidency and "*al-wali"* (the governor) as the central mechanism of territorial control. In addition, the Ministry of Interior, the principal instance of the "police state" that had been established under Ben Ali (Geisser and Gobe 2008: 349), was granted veto power in all matters concerning the fripe sector.

The performative delimitation of the fripe as 'dual economic sector' that occurred through the adoption of comprehensive legislation in 1995 must thus be interpreted as part of Ben Ali's systematic instrumentalization of economic liberalisation reforms that were "generously lubricated by external grants and concessionary loans" during structural adjustment (Pfeifer 1999: 26). Although the 1995 law ostensibly performed market incorporation, it in fact served as a tool for expanding the group of monopolists in the fripe import business, while rapidly blocking access to the sector for competitors.

b. Governing the domestic fripe sector as a 'parallel economy'

The symbolic act of market incorporation performed through the adoption of the 1995 law ostensibly sharpened the formal contours of the fripe as "*qitaa rasmi"* (official sector) and translated into the production of detailed legal provisions pertaining to all aspects of the economy. At the same time however, these new legal provisions produced exclusions – now framed as "informality" in the language of IFIs – especially because they went contrary to most established economic practices in the domestic fripe trade. With the legal separation between the export-oriented sorting and recycling business and the domestic fripe market failing to materialise in practice, the rapid increase in fripe imports during the late 1990s resulted in an explosion of fripe wholesale and retail activities in Tunisia. Digressing from the 1995 legal provisions, these commercial activities were now framed as "*mwazi"* (parallel) or as "informal" in the reports of IFIs and foreign donors, and were thus designated as "lying in the shadow of the state" (Elyachar 2005: 79). As was the case with other commercial activities at the time, this system of differentiation served the state in two ways: First, it allowed for governing the fripe as negative 'outside' to the formal economy. This not only opened periodic opportunities for rent extraction, but allowed for the establishment of a "regulated form of informality" (Meddeb 2015: 72), with different state actors assuming distinct roles and responsibilities, albeit divergent from those codified in the law. Second, it constituted a welcome mechanism of "self-help" (ibid: 9), supplying affordable goods and employment at a time of exacerbating socio-economic crisis at zero cost to the state.

The intentional governance of the domestic fripe commerce as a 'parallel economy' must be understood in the context of an unprecedented unemployment crisis in Tunisia as a consequence of structural adjustment. Privatisations and public spending cuts had caused a net loss of formal wage labour (Pfeifer 1999: 26), and reforms skewed in favour of large-scale industrial farming had exacerbated unequal access to land in rural areas (King 2003: 38). Exploding youth unemployment confronted the Ben Ali regime with a political challenge, and ad hoc policies of containment represented the dominant state response. So-called "*programmes d'occupation*" (occupation programs), providing temporary employment on fictitious construction sites, combined with the violent repression of any form of discontent through the police state, thus came to dominate interactions between the state and broad sections of society (Hibou 2015: 107). In the absence of structural solutions to the unemployment crisis, commercial activities came to play a vital role in providing income to a rapidly growing pool of surplus labour (Meddeb 2012: 326). As a fast-expanding trade with increasing import volumes post-1995, the

fripe was one of the commercial sectors that gained new importance in the provision of jobs and supply of affordable consumer goods. The government thus had an interest in guaranteeing uninterrupted fripe supplies, and in incorporating growing numbers of retailers and wholesalers into the flourishing trade. The domestic fripe trade therefore became one of the Ben Ali regime's mechanisms of governing "at a distance" and through "delegation at lowest cost" (Hibou 2015: 114), buying social peace while allowing regime cronies to syphon off the bulk of the profits in the sector. While this surge in commercial activities was directly encouraged by the state, it was described as the "growth of the informal sector" in World Bank reports, discursively disassociating the formal state from the diverse, nominally 'informal' economic activities that were now providing livelihoods to the majority of the population (Elyachar 2005: 9, 79). Accordingly, in a World Bank report on Tunisia in 1995, a large proportion of economic activity, namely 40% of all non-agricultural employment and 95% of all existing small-scale enterprises were bracketed within the "informal economy" (King 2003: 37).

Such framings were bolstered by the imposition of legal provisions in 1995 that both created grey areas open to diverse interpretations, and actively produced different forms of 'illicitness'. First, the new legislation effectively rendered a substantial part of the fripe merchandise traded in Tunisia illicit, with article 11 banning the sale of diverse leatherwares, shoes and used toys from sale on the domestic market and stipulating their complete re-export from Tunisia. Second, the 1995 law contained complex regulatory provisions that went contrary to long-established economic practices. This deliberate production of 'illicitness' provided openings for rent extraction by different levels of the state, as is for instance illustrated by the new regulations for the fripe wholesale trade. By stipulating the even distribution of wholesale licenses across all Tunisian governorates, the law gave renewed political leverage to the governors through the distribution of licenses. At the same time, the law imposed a rule of non-movement between governorates for the wholesalers, forcing them to buy exclusively from sorting factories located within the governorate's boundaries. This entailed a flourishing trade in licenses, with wholesalers 'leasing' their licenses to wholesalers from other governorates to allow them to increase their radius of operation. In addition, lucrative arrangements with the "*hars al-watani"* (the national guard), responsible for guarding national roadways, as well as *"al-diwana"* (the customs) stationed at the port and in sorting factories, allowed the security forces to earn a substantive rent from the lucrative wholesale business from 1995 onwards.

The mismatch between legal text and economic practices that resulted from the adoption of the 1995 legal framework hence allowed for governing the domestic fripe trade as "*iqtisad mwazi"* (parallel economy). Locating domestic commercial activities in the fripe performatively beyond the "*qitaa rasmi*" (official sector) – now delimited by the 1995 framework legislation – thereby achieved a convenient double-effect for the Ben Ali regime. First, it propagated the idea of 'state absence', effectively absolving the state of any direct responsibility for managing the bulk of economic activity in the sector, underlining its inherently unknowable, and thus ungovernable character. Second, it provided a justification for periodic state intervention and distinct mechanisms of governing, often framed as attempts to reign in various forms of transgression or illicitness. The prism of security and stability thus justified the direct implication of the Ministry of Interior in the fripe sector, as well the governorates as direct representatives of the central state in the different regions of Tunisia. Simultaneously, day-to-day oversight of the fripe trade was delegated to the *"diwana"* (customs authorities), the "*hars al-watani"* (national guard) and the "*shurta"* (police). As literature on flourishing cross-border trade with Libya during the 1990s demonstrated, the Ben Ali regime thus never simply turned a blind eye to the commercial activities framed as "*tahrib"* (smuggling), but instead established indirect control through various mechanisms of informal governance that nurtured Ben Ali's powerful police state (Boubakri 2001; Meddeb 2012). Similarly, the emerging systems of lucrative rent extraction

and political interference of different state actors in the fripe economy from 1995 must be understood not as individual cases of mismanagement or corruption, but as highly systematic and regulated forms of governing through informality.

The 1995 framework legislation for the fripe thus highlights the state's ambiguous role in delimiting 'the economy'. Formal and informal registers of action functioning in parallel show the state to be a dispersed economic actor that intervenes through different mechanisms and at different scales. On the surface, the performative act of law-making in 1995 allowed Ben Ali to pay lip service to structural adjustment stipulations underpinning debt financing, by transforming the fripe into an offshore sector guaranteeing advantages to foreign investors. In reality however, the fripe's restructuring into a fictive dual economy allowed for political incorporation, expanding a highly lucrative monopoly position to a narrow group of businessmen connected to the Ben Ali regime. Simultaneously, the state withdrew from its responsibility in managing the domestic fripe economy by framing the bulk of established economic activities as 'illicit' on the basis of the 1995 legal provisions. Governing the fripe commerce as a 'parallel economy' facilitated its integration into the regime's "systematic clientelist policy of selective redistribution of resources" at different scales (Ayeb 2011: 468). While the flourishing fripe trade thus came to subsidise the local and central state – and most of all the inflated security apparatus – its performative constitution as 'black box' officially removed it from the realm of government.

5. Opening the 'black box'? Internal blockage and the defence of the status quo

The 2011 revolution and demise of the Ben Ali regime in Tunisia marked the end of direct regime participation in the fripe sector because members of the family clan either went into exile or hiding. In addition, the resulting power reconfigurations at the head of the state translated into a weakening of informal mechanisms of oversight. Consequently, an unprecedented surge in import volumes and unchecked entry of wholesalers and retailers to the sector post-2011 increasingly constituted the fripe as a 'problem space' for the newly elected government, and the disappearance of the political taboo that had long surrounded the sector now triggered attempts to open the 'black box' of the fripe and to initiate reform.

The following section analyses this conjuncture of attempted sector reform, focusing on a temporally fragmented and circular process of internal debate, blockage and then escalating conflict between 2014 and 2018. These processes are in part on-going, remaining without clear outcome, and so foreground the contested role of the state in the contemporary fripe economy. On the one hand, the state has recently sought to intervene as a regulator and law-maker, attempting to redraw the contours of the fripe as formal economic sector. On the other hand, such attempts have been thwarted by the multi-layered involvement of various state actors in governing the 'black box' of the fripe, meaning that powerful vested interests have impeded sector reform that would have allowed for the fripe's full incorporation into the Tunisian economy.

a. The emergence of the fripe as a problem space with disputed contours

Before 2011, direct regime participation in the fripe economy and a strict division of tasks between different levels of the state and the security forces had guaranteed a degree of oversight, and thus stability, in the fripe economy. Diverse informal control mechanisms had for instance tempered competition between importers and wholesalers, controlled price-setting on the domestic market, and

limited entry to the sector and increases in imports. The breakdown or temporary weakening of such informal control mechanisms in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution resulted in rapid changes in the fripe sector, most notably an unchecked increase in fripe imports that catapulted annual imports to an estimated 150,000 tons, with actual quantities being potentially higher due to important non-, and mis-declarations[51]. In addition, numerous unlicensed wholesalers entered the market post-2011 and some already established wholesalers began to import fripe materials without intermediaries, managing their own container transport and buying supplies directly from the port[52]. "Complete anarchy now reigns in the sector", an official in the Ministry of Commerce declared in 2018, "and their (the fripe importers' and wholesalers') greed has no limits, which is why we now see completely inflated prices and ever-greater quantities of fripe on the market (…), we really need to stop this" [53].

The fall of the Ben Ali regime also allowed the fripe to turn into a topic of public debate and controversy for the first time because taboos about systemic state corruption in Tunisia were removed. As one of the sectors closely intertwined with the old regime, the fripe sector now came under public scrutiny, especially because unprecedented quantities of fripe imports began to materialise in sprawling retail landscapes all over Tunisia's towns and cities. The Tunisian media associated such tangible changes with corrupt practices that had outlasted the 2011 revolution and with the weakness of the post-revolutionary state (Huffingtonpost 2013; Inkyfada 2014). In addition, lobby groups of the textile and shoe producing industries like the Tunisian Chamber for Textile and Clothing Production (FTTH) used the newly unfolding public debate about the fripe to launch a vociferous campaign against the continuation of used garment imports (African Manager 2016)[54]. While post-revolutionary closures in the textile sector mainly concerned export-oriented industries that were in fact unrelated to the domestic market[55], the textile lobby blamed the fripe for the crisis, asking the government to curb imports and halt the expansion of a sector portrayed as harmful to the national economy.

By 2014, the newly elected government[56] was thus confronted with increasing pressures to take action and demonstrate the capacities of the post-revolutionary state to intervene effectively as a law-maker and regulator. A growing number of voices in the government, and particularly the Ministry of Commerce, called for a complete overhaul of existing legislation in order to counteract the glaring mismatch between outdated legal provisions and the sector's present-day reality. Signalling the priority position the fripe sector had gained on the government's reform agenda, a special inter-ministerial committee – habitually simply referred to as "*al-lajna"* (the committee) – was assembled by the presidency to elaborate reform proposals for the fripe sector. As one of the committee members confirmed, the *lajna* was instructed to treat the fripe as "issue of primary importance" and to set an end to the sector's association with corruption and mismanagement[57]. The existing legal framework from 1995 guaranteed the direct involvement of five state ministries[58] and multiple government agencies in decision-making on the fripe economy, meaning that the endeavour of sector reform involved a drawn-out process of multi-actor coordination and negotiation. The Ministry of Commerce was put in charge of leading the reform process.

[51] Diverging estimates were provided in interviews with the Ministry of Commerce between May and July 2018; Official information requests for import data in 2018 and 2019 at the customs authorities were declined;
[52] Appendix I, Interview 20;
[53] Appendix I, Interview 21;
[54] Appendix I, Interview 22;
[55] Most closures affected purely export-oriented companies created under the 1972 textile law and were due to exacerbated competition after the scrapping of the multi-fibre agreements (MFAs) in 2005, as well as social movements post-2011 that prompted transnational firms to shift to subcontractors in other countries (Aliriza 2020(a));
[56] The first free parliamentary elections were held in October 2014, and a month later, Beji Caid Essebsi was elected president;
[57] Appendix I, Interview 23;
[58] Directly involved are the Ministries of Commerce, Industry, Finance, The Interior and Social Affairs;

While the fripe had thus transformed into a 'problem space', its exact contours remained disputed because those charged with the "*dossier de la fripe"* (fripe file) in different ministries lacked reliable information on the sector. They confronted a framework legislation that had remained virtually unchanged since 1995, barring minor amendments in 2005[59], and had lost any relation to reality. As the person entrusted with the fripe file in the Ministry of Commerce recounted, "we inherited a black box (…). Because the sector belonged to the Trabelsiya[60], no one dared to open this file." Expressing embarrassment about the "unrealistic and outdated numbers" available for the sector, he eventually laughed heartily about the official quota for domestic consumption that had remained unaltered since 1999, remarking that "even multiplying it by ten will not give you a realistic number"[61]. While different ministries and state agencies agreed on the acute lack of data and statistics, their varying estimates – for instance for import volumes, employment numbers in the sector, or domestic consumption – diverged considerably and produced immediate conflict within the inter-ministerial reform committee. Angered by such disagreements, an official in the Ministry of Industry exclaimed: "Tell me, how can you start designing a reform without having a *"taqrir rasmi"* (official report)? And how can you produce an official report without "*muraqaba*" (oversight)?" [62] . Reflecting such statements, many state representatives foregrounded the fripe's 'unknowable' character to highlight the impossibility of reform, with the absence of a shared base of information depriving the state of its capacity to 'govern' the fripe[63].

To overcome this impasse, the inter-ministerial reform committee charged the Ministry of Commerce with elaborating a sector study in 2014. This study was to provide comprehensive information and up-to-date numbers on all aspects of the fripe economy, and was to become the basis for designing reform proposals that would enable a full incorporation of the fripe into "*al-iqtisad al-rasmi"* (the formal (lit. official) economy).

b. Internal resistance to knowledge production and reform

While the inter-ministerial committee explicitly asked all ministries to cooperate with the Ministry of Commerce to facilitate the sector study's speedy completion, many state actors in fact refused such cooperation or even actively impeded the study's realisation. Two main reasons underpinned the various forms of internal blockage and sabotage that hindered systematic knowledge production on the fripe economy. First, internal competition between the different ministries and other state actors involved in governing the fripe economy since 1995 meant that the study was not perceived as a neutral process of knowledge production, but rather was considered to be skewed in favour of the Ministry of Commerce and its particular interests. Second, rendering the fripe 'knowable', and allowing for quantification and measurement, posed a threat to existing monopolies of knowledge that had underpinned complex governing arrangements between diverse state- and non-state actors.

Attempts to produce reliable information on the fripe economy were thus first and foremost impeded by competing interests within the state. While commissioned by the inter-ministerial committee, other state actors immediately dismissed the study as a partisan project of the Ministry of Commerce, which was

[59] The 2005 amendment (decree n°2005-2038, Journal Officiel de la République Tunisienne, 26 July 2005: 1896) only makes minor changes to the existing 1995 legal framework;
[60] The term "Trabelsiya" is used to refer to president Ben Ali's wife's family clan that controlled large parts of Tunisia's economy until 2011;
[61] Appendix I, Interview 24;
[62] Appendix I, Interview 25;
[63] Similar statements were evoked in interviews with the Ministries of Industry, Commerce and Social Affairs between May and August 2018;

accused of utilising it strategically to expand its sphere of influence in the fripe economy. Consecutive narratives of who was to blame for blocking the sector study thus shifted from one state interlocutor to another. One key culprit identified by several state actors was the Ministry of Industry, which was said to have feared that the sector study would mean its responsibilities in overseeing the industrial sorting processes in the fripe sector would be diminished. As a result, the Ministry of Industry was said to have deliberately blocked access for information gathering by delays and repeated non-appearances at planned inspections of sorting factories. These crucial sites for comprehending the contemporary fripe economy – providing insight into import, sorting, recycling and re-export activities – are under the Ministry of Industry's tutelage so that Ministry of Commerce could not conduct factory inspections without its approval and company. Similarly, the Ministry of Finance and the subordinated customs authority were blamed for having repeatedly ignored information requests from the Ministry of Commerce, thus impeding information gathering on imports and re-exports, preserving Tunisia's main container port Rades as a 'black box' with no access granted to the other state agencies. An official of the Ministry of Social Affairs, himself a member of the inter-ministerial committee for fripe sector reform but claiming to have a "neutral standpoint", summarised the inter-ministerial competition and blockage as follows: "This is all about the fripe's offshore status. Everyone knows it has to be abolished and the fripe must be taxed like other imports, but it means the customs (under the Ministry of Finance) and the Ministry of Industry are out. The fripe will be what it actually is, a commercial sector under the responsibility of the Ministry of Commerce".

In addition to blockage from within the state, the sector study immediately faced the opposition of different fripe sector representatives and influential importers and wholesalers. Rather than forming a united front, the different actors of the fripe economy were themselves divided and had built strategic alliances to specific state actors over time[64]. The two chambers representing fripe importers and wholesalers in Tunisia's employer association UTICA since the 1990s[65] interpreted the study as an attempt to *"*find justifications for outlawing the fripe*",* as the head of the wholesale chamber put it, and thus squarely opposed the initiative from the beginning. Sector representatives had however split post-2011, with a new inter-professional grouping of fripe importers, wholesalers and retailers seceding from the two existing chambers in 2013 to join the newly founded employers' association CONECT. Differentiating themselves intentionally from "*al-nukhbat al-qdima bil qitaa*" (the old sector elites), as their chairman put it, they showed themselves open to reform and even actively lobbied the Ministry of Industry to champion their reform proposals[66]. They nevertheless opposed the commissioned sector study as biased in favour of the textile lobby, and accused the Ministry of Commerce as acting "as representatives of the textile sector". The inter-professional CONECT grouping thus commissioned its own sector study and received an invitation by the Ministry of Industry to present the findings, openly challenging the Ministry of Commerce's lead on knowledge production on the sector.

Rather than clear fault lines between 'the state' and fripe sector representatives, cross-cutting alliances and enmities thus characterised the debates over opening the *black box* of the fripe. On the one hand, internal competition highlighted the state's hybrid constitution, consisting of diverse actors representing partisan interests and aiming to preserve or expand their own sphere of influence. On the other hand, strategic alliances between state and non-state actors testify to the multiple, formal and informal governance arrangements that had come to govern the fripe sector since 1995 and had resulted in the

[64] Appendix I, Interview 22, 26–28;

[65] The "chambre nationale des importateurs, exportateurs et transformateurs de la friperie" and the "chambre nationale des commerçants grossistes de friperie" are organised within UTICA (Union Tunisienne des Industries, du Commerce et de l'Artisanat);

[66] Appendix I, Interview 26;

emergence of vested interests in maintaining the status quo. Both the resistance to the production of a sector study, and competing projects of knowledge creation underline the crucial political and economic stakes that had become tied up with the fripe's professed 'ungovernability', or delimitation as parallel economy, over time. As the next section outlines, such vested interests effectively curtailed the state's capacity to act as a formal law-maker and regulator, forging alliances between state- and non-state actors that intervened strategically to pre-empt reform.

c. Governing the fripe as a security risk and preserving the status quo

The production of competing data concerning the fripe sector and internal sabotage prevented the Ministry of Commerce from completing the sector study. Nevertheless, the Ministry began to produce different confidential documents from 2015 onwards, setting out proposed reform scenarios for the fripe sector. Innumerable inter-ministerial meetings under the lead of the special committee ensued, with opposing factions precluding opportunities for constructive debate. This tedious process of inter-ministerial concertation continued until autumn 2016, when the process was intentionally thwarted, most probably by an alliance of state actors and fripe sector representatives. Making strategic use of the fripe's political salience as a popular consumer good and crucial source of employment, leaked information resulted in a national polemic, triggering a return of the security governance of the fripe and immediately stalling all reform attempts.

Divergent accounts exist over who derailed the reform process in October 2016. Officials and employees of the Ministry of Commerce, for whom the 2016 escalation translated into a stalling of already-elaborated reform proposals, blame members of the special inter-ministerial committee for having leaked confidential information to fripe sector representatives. As an official in the Ministry of Commerce confided, he suspected representatives of the Ministry of Industry or Finance, as they felt threatened by a proposed overhaul of the fripe's 'offshore' status that had been put forward to the committee in September 2016[67]. The Ministry of Industry of course refuted such claims, arguing instead that members of the committee had divulged information directly to the media. Whatever the information channels, the chairmen of the chambers representing fripe wholesalers and importers in UTICA organised a press conference on the 5th of October 2016 to denounce what they called the government's "*mashrouaa qanun"* (legislative project) for the fripe sector. Declaring that the reform "will pose a lethal threat to the fripe business and thus hundreds of thousands of jobs" (BusinessNews 2016), they intentionally stoked fears over an imminent import ban. To underline the severity of the situation, both chambers threatened the government with strike action, and called upon traders and consumers to mobilise for what they termed "a basic right to affordable clothing" (Économiste Maghrebin 2016). While the Ministry of Commerce attempted to quell rumours about a planned import ban, the sector representatives had successfully caused public uproar and had gained widespread attention in the media. In response, spontaneous protests erupted in fripe marketplaces in Tunis and other Tunisian cities (ibid), underlining the risk of more widespread mobilisation.

In light of this escalating conflict, a swift, top-down reaction by the Ministry of Interior forced the Ministry of Commerce to immediately stall all reform plans and to halt inter-ministerial consultations until further notice. While this decision took place behind closed doors and most state interlocuters simply recounted pressures "*min fawq"* (from above), others directly named "*al-dakhiliya"* (The Ministry of Interior) as responsible for halting the reform process. Evoking the imminent political risk

[67] The loss of the 'offshore' status would have removed the fripe from the sphere of influence of both ministries (customs and industrial enterprises);

of social unrest, the Ministry of Interior acted on the grounds of national stability, mirroring a perpetuation of the politics of "risk avoidance and containment" that had dominated the late Ben Ali regime (Marzouki 2014). The fripe sector representatives – and their potential allies within the state – had thus successfully demonstrated the enduring political salience of the fripe as both a consumer good and a vital source of employment, both of which could immediately transform it into a ground for mobilisation. The primacy of national security – and more specifically, the fear of popular discontent – thus shut down a temporary opening for political decision-making, marking continuity with the fripe's governance through a security lens under Ben Ali's police state.

The stalling of reforms in 2016 through the Ministry of Interior was at first seen as a temporary measure. However, ongoing political instability in Tunisia has reproduced similar scenarios ever since. While the Ministry of Commerce produced a "*taqrir nihai"* (final report) proposing three options for sector reform that was to be tabled in the inter-ministerial reform committee in January 2018, the eruption of countrywide protests once again postponed the debate. The rapid devaluation of the Tunisian Dinar and government plans to curb subsidies as part of new austerity measures imposed by the IMF had caused mobilisations across the country (Middle East Eye 2018; Chatham House 2018). As a representative of the Ministry of Social Affairs in the presidential committee put it at the time, "people are out and angry because their money cannot buy them what it used to. If you touch the fripe now, you will have a second Revolution"[68]. Consecutive government attempts to intervene as a regulating force in the fripe economy – for instance through import ceilings imposed by the Ministry of Commerce, or customs decrees reigning in the flourishing trade in banned fripe materials – repeatedly resulted in escalating conflict. At times, nation-wide mobilisations of traders and strike action by wholesalers and importers ensued, as was the case in November 2019 when the customs authorities attempted to crack down on the burgeoning second-hand shoe trade (La Presse de Tunisie 2019). Once again, the proposal was eventually revoked because of pressure from the Ministry of Interior behind closed doors.

The sector study of the Ministry of Commerce thus remains incomplete to date[69], and reform attempts for the fripe sector have remained stalled. As a consequence, the 1995 law codifying diverse layers of state participation and guaranteeing the monopoly position of a narrow group of importers has remained virtually unchanged to the present day. While these legal provisions have only ever nominally governed the fripe sector, the preservation of this status quo in fact protects multiple layers of informal governing arrangements that have developed under its guise over the past decades. As this conjuncture of failed reform attempts demonstrates, powerful vested interests both within and beyond the state opposed projects of systematic knowledge production that could have become a basis for the fripe's performative incorporation into the realm of the 'governable'. Instead, discrete alliances in defence of the fripe's constitution as 'black box' instrumentalised its contemporary political salience to impede legal reform and thus to protect their spheres of influence in the economy. Rather than a confrontation between 'the state' and 'the fripe', the contestations here described blur such boundaries and underline the highly contingent politics that underpin shifting differentiations between the 'formal' and the 'informal', or the 'licit' and the 'illicit' in the contemporary fripe economy.

[68] Appendix I, Interview 29;
[69] An information request submitted on November 28th 2019 to the Ministry of Commerce on behalf of the Tunisian NGO *Cartographie Citoyenne* was met with the official response that no sector study had ever been commissioned;

6. Conclusion

The three conjunctures analysed in this chapter reveal the shifting systems of differentiation through which the state has shaped the contours of the fripe as 'economy' in post-independence Tunisia. Through mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, the state variably delimited the fripe as both 'official sector' and as 'black box' over time. Such differentiation has become the basis for distinct modes of governing the fripe, and thus is central to comprehending its political economy: under the post-independence regime of Bourguiba, the fripe's ambiguous character as 'charity good' kept it under tight state control and framed it as a form of state benevolence, rather than an 'ordinary commercial good'. Subsequently, the fripe's transformation into a dual market in 1995 enabled the nominal separation of a lucrative offshore business from the domestic fripe commerce, which began to be governed predominantly as an 'informal economy' under the new legal provisions. Finally, resistances to the attempted opening of the 'black box' for sector reform post-2011 revealed the entrenched governing arrangements between various state and non-state actors that have emerged under the guise of the fripe's 'ungovernability' and that would be threatened by its full incorporation into the Tunisian economy.

The distinct political economy that emerges from these three conjunctures shows the historical constitution of the fripe through evolving political configurations, and thus situates it within a national politics. Further, the chapter demonstrates the state's central role in constituting the fripe as a contested realm of the contemporary urban economy in Tunis. While the state's practices of "enframing" are typically understood as attempts of "rendering legible" (Mitchell 1988: 60), this account foregrounds the – more or less intentional – forms of illegibility produced by the shifting lines of inclusion and exclusion drawn by the Tunisian state around the fripe as a realm of the economy. Analysing the evolving political and economic motives that underpinned the performative constitution of the fripe as 'ungovernable' sphere sheds light on the state and its modes of operation in the economy: first, the three conjunctures emphasise the contingencies inherent in state action, as diverse entities and multiple layers of the state participate in governing the fripe, and as their partisan interests and agendas are often incompatible with or inextricably linked to actors positioned beyond the formal delimitations of the state. Second, the different conjunctures render visible the state in highly differentiated capacities, not merely as a law-maker or regulator, but also as a rationally calculating – and often profit-driven – participant and market-maker in the fripe economy.

Both perspectives on the state as an actor in the fripe economy in Tunisia's post-independence history matter to understanding its contemporary role in shaping the urban fripe economy in Tunis. The following chapters mainly hone in on "parochial sightings of the state" (Das and Poole 2004: 6), meaning the different forms and agencies of the state as encountered in the practices and processes that co-constitute the present-day fripe economy. While many of the state actors discussed in the rest of this thesis thus operate at the local rather than the national level, their modes of participation or intervention in the fripe economy are conditioned by, and inseparable from, the forms of state agency explored in this political economy of the fripe. For instance, while the last conjuncture of failed reform attempts post-2011 conveys a sense of blockage and standstill, the conflicts it describes in the hallways of state ministries were also played out in other spaces of the urban fripe economy. Beyond the polemic over planned reform in 2016 and 2019, instances of arrest like the one of Chokri Chniti discussed in the introduction to this chapter point to the unprecedented volatility of relations with the state that have characterised the "slow and chaotic process of transformation" (Marzouki and Meddeb 2016: 127) in Tunisia since 2011. Insight into the fripe's political economy in post-independence Tunisia is therefore crucial to comprehending contemporary power reconfigurations in the fripe economy. Against interpretations of the 2011 revolution as a 'neat rupture', an understanding of the 'regulated'

mechanisms of informal governance that characterise interactions between diverse state and non-state actors in the fripe economy renders visible subtle readjustments of alliances, fault lines and competition over recent years. Rather than a confrontation between 'the state' and 'a criminal individual', Chokri Chniti's arrest – and indeed the recent prosecution of other "*barons de la fripe",* as the old elite of fripe importers are often referred to – thus exposes a shift in political and economic power relations and alliances in which the law becomes a tool for selective inclusion or exclusion. Similarly, the customs raids, market clearances, or new methods of extraction discussed over the following chapters must thus be read as indicative of a weakening of the – often-tacit and invisible – regulations that had governed the fripe as a 'black box' or an allegedly 'ungovernable sphere' over preceding decades.

Figure 4 The entrance to the *Hafsia* fripe market in the Tunis medina (2019)

Chapter II

Counter-histories of city-making: the fripe trade in the *Hafsia* and *Ibn Khaldoun*

The large wooden desk is entirely covered in different layers of planning documents that Mr. F. has gradually unfolded over the course of the hour-long conversation and he sits down, visibly exhausted[70]. Taking a sip from the glass of cold tea that balances on the edge of his desk, he then says, as if to conclude: "The *Hafsia* and *Ibn Khaldoun* (projects) were amongst the most remarkable modernisation efforts we had in the capital city after independence. The *Hafsia* became the first large rehabilitation project in the *medina*[71] and *Ibn Khaldoun* was the first comprehensive housing project that tried to integrate rural populations from the *gourbivilles*[72] (slum settlements) and offered them a new lifestyle. We didn't have anything like it before or after*",* Mr. F. sighs while readjusting his glasses. Taking his words as an invitation to get up, I remark it will be interesting to go back to both areas after having familiarised myself with the original plans. Mr. F.'s expression changes to a scowl as he gets up abruptly and grumbles, "there is absolutely nothing left to see of these projects, both areas are ruined"*,* and after a short pause he adds, "*grâce à la fripe"* (thanks to the fripe).

Indeed, the sites of the two flagship projects Mr. F. described are today chiefly known to inhabitants of Tunis for their sprawling fripe markets. Both in the rehabilitated, historic inner-city quarter of the *Hafsia* and in the 1970s housing estate *Ibn Khaldoun,* fripe traders occupy the centre of the neighbourhood and the surrounding wholesale storages and retail supplies turn the areas into specialised commercial districts. Originally, the rehabilitation of the *Hafsia* was designed as an exemplary intervention in the city's historic urban fabric. Meanwhile, the construction of the housing estate *Ibn Khaldoun* on a blank slate was to become a replicable model for a new urban housing policy. Both flagship projects were part of modernisation efforts that aimed to dispel fears of a "ruralisation of the capital city" post-independence (Berry-Chikhaoui 1994: 238). Proliferating fripe trading was seen as one of the indicators of this advancing ruralisation, because the commerce had turned into an important income-earning niche for rapidly increasing numbers of rural migrants in Tunis from the 1960s onwards. Given that the fripe was thus emblematic of the backward, rural lifestyles that were to be eradicated by the flagship projects, how can its prominent, contemporary presence at the heart of both of the renewal sites be accounted for?

Official project documentation makes no mention of the fripe trade, and most planners, architects or decision-makers involved in the flagship projects either squarely refuse to discuss the matter, or evoke the fripe and its migrant trader constituencies merely as encroachers that subverted original planning visions. To account for the fripe's presence as a 'rural migrant economy' at the heart of the two urban renewal sites, this chapter therefore constructs counter-histories of the flagship projects of the *Hafsia* and *Ibn Khaldoun* in post-independence Tunis. It does so by centring on selected trajectories of particular rural migrant traders who built livelihoods in the fripe trade and at the heart of the two renewal sites. Such counter-histories thus depart from framings of rural migrants as the "constitutive outside" (Roy 2016: 813) or negative foil for visions of 'urban development' in post-independence Tunis, and simultaneously aim to reposition them as central agents of urban change. Through a close-up analysis of the fragmented implementation processes by which abstract planning visions translated into

[70] Appendix I., Interview 30;

[71] The term *medina* lit. means "city" in Arabic but is here used to designate the historic old city of Tunis, an area of 270ha built up from the 7th century and expanded through a Northern and Southern "*faubourg"* (suburb) during the middle ages;

[72] Sebag coined the term "*gourbiville"* - derived from the word "*gourbi*" describing a particular form of mud housing – in his pioneering study of Borgel in Tunis (1958);

contingent urban transformations, these counter-histories shed light on the opportunities for partial incorporation and co-production that emerged for those nominally excluded from the renewal projects. This unsettles binaries between planned and unplanned space, and official city-makers and encroachers that have long underpinned understandings of the 'urban order' and continue to sustain the fripe's contested positioning in present-day Tunis, denoted by pejorative uses of the term *fripisation*.

Before turning to the two flagship renewal projects in the *Hafsia* and *Ibn Khaldoun,* the first section explains how this chapter constructs "counter-histories" of urban transformation in post-independence Tunis by centring on the role of the fripe trade. For this purpose, it traces the fripe's history as 'rural migrant economy' in the capital and examines the dichotomy between 'rural, backward' and 'urban, modern' forms that dominated urban planning and renewal policies in Tunis after independence. The subsequent sections then recount the two counter-histories in parallel, jumping between the two urban renewal sites and the four central protagonists whose particular trajectories structure this account. The two renewal projects are markedly different in their scope, objectives and temporal and spatial parameters. Nonetheless, telling these counter-histories side by side has two important effects: first, it underlines the always-singular and often unanticipated configurations that underpin urban transformation; and, second, it gestures beyond a unique example, highlighting a broader urban process through which a specific economy came to co-produce the modern urban order. The chapter therefore offers a particular perspective on urban transformation, using these counter-histories to demonstrate how urban marketplaces are social and spatial structures that participate in city-making.

1. Counter-histories of urban transformation in post-independence Tunis

The fripe's persistent absence from official accounts of urban development in contemporary Tunis must be understood through its positioning as a marginal 'migrant economy' in the post-independence city. As the first section below outlines (1a), post-independence urban modernisation in Tunis was based on, and in turn reproduced, clear binaries between the planned and the unplanned, the backward and the modern, and the rural and the urban. The "urban" and "rural" therefore turned into juxtaposed "governmental categories" (Roy 2016: 814) that underpinned planning ideologies and guided urban policies in the capital city. As the fripe was considered "*tijarat al-zwawila"* (a poor people's trade), it became an important income-earning niche for rural migrants arriving in the capital city and soon turned into an emblem for the 'rural backwardness' that ambitious modernisation plans for the post-independence capital city set out to either eradicate or assimilate into a new urban order. To unsettle the neat binaries between "the rural" and "the urban" that conditioned the fripe's contested positioning in the city then and now, the second section (1b) sets out how the rewriting of the history of the *Hafsia* and *Ibn Khaldoun* renewal projects provides an alternative account of urban transformation.

a. The fripe as 'migrant economy' and emblem of ruralisation

In post-independence Tunis, the fripe had negative connotations as a poor people's trade because it was associated with both a legacy of post-war charity deliveries and house-to-house collection of "*ruba fikia"* (old clothes). From colonial times, the *ruba fikia* collectors of Tunis, who bartered people's used garments and shoes against household items, copper or other objects, were often considered as "*populations incontrôlables*" (uncontrollable populations), associated with "illegal trade, garbage collection, waste picking, but also gang crime" who inhabited slum settlements like *Mellassine* outside the gates of the *medina* (Liauzu 1976: 611). As the resale of used garments was mainly organised as an

itinerant trade, *ruba fikia* traders invaded public space and faced frequent arrest by the police, adding to their portrayal as a nuisance and as an unwanted population (ibid). With the onset of commercial fripe imports during the 1960s (Van Groen and Lozer 1976: 6), fripe trading proliferated in the capital city, but constituted an undesirable occupation layered with social stigma. This was reinforced by the distribution of trading licenses as social assistance (noted in Chapter I), blurring the lines between charity and urban commerce, and thus positioning the fripe as a 'poverty trade'. In addition, the fripe's persistent exclusion from formally planned urban marketplaces relegated the trade to the fringes of other urban markets or public squares and streets where traders temporarily squatted to sell their clothes on sheets spread on the ground. Frequent confrontations with the police turned the trade into a highly precarious income source, reinforcing its marginal positioning in the city.

Due to its negative reputation as poverty trade, the fripe thus turned into a niche for rural migrants who lacked the necessary skills to enter the formal labour market in the city (Sebag 1960: 7, 83). Rural populations migrating to Tunis had been framed as threats to the urban order – and more specifically, as sources of crime, disorder and disease – since the 1930s, when colonial policies of land expropriation and restrictions on the freedom of movement of nomadic tribes caused an unprecedented rural exodus (Mejri 2004: 5). Such framings, and associated policies of slum demolition and forced deportation were upheld post-independence, with a decree in 1957 ordering the return to the countryside of all those unable to prove regular employment (Sethom 1995: 204). In spite of such policies, a further acceleration of rural-urban migration occurred during the 1960s[73], worsening the existing housing crisis in the capital and resulting in what was pejoratively framed as "*débordement de la campagne sur la capitale*" ("spillover of the countryside into the capital") (Abdelkafi 1986: 230). In the eyes of the authorities, the threat posed by the increasing rural migrant population was two-fold: first, as captured in the pejorative term "*nuzuh"* (lit. displaced), rural migrants were seen as uprooted and uncontrollable populations that infringed upon systems of land and property registry, erecting sprawling squatter settlements referred to as *gourbivilles* (Sebag 1958). Second, as expressed by a second derogatory designation, "*jabri",* (ignorant, uneducated), rural migrants were seen as culturally and socially backward and were "denied the capacity to construct themselves as modern urban subjects" (Berry-Chikhaoui 2009:15).

Post-independence planning must thus be understood as an effort to contain the threatening ruralisation of Tunis. "*Aménagement urbain"* (urban planning) became a key tool for devising a modern urban order[74] that would result in both spatial and social transformation (Hizem 1999: 57). During the first decades after independence, often called the 'era of the plan', urban modernisation was infused with an ideology of assimilation that lay at the heart of Bourguiba's project of nation-building, aiming to efface all particularities in favour of an homogenous national identity (Bessis 2019: 362). Modernising the capital city and creating a form of universal "*citadinité"* (lit. urban citizenship) that would assimilate "diverse rural lifestyles" (Sethom 1995: 199) was considered a central pillar of this larger political project. The new, homogeneous modern urban order was to be achieved, first, through large-scale demolitions of substandard housing, mainly slum settlements and dilapidated historic housing (Chabbi 1989: 250). The interventions in the historic *Hafsia* quarter discussed in this chapter formed part of such demolition operations, framed as "*dé-densification"* (de-densification) and executed under slogans of "public hygiene and order" in a dense urban fabric deemed uninhabitable (Berry-Chikhaoui 1994:

[73] For a discussion of the collectivization of agriculture and push-factors for rural-urban migration during the 1960s, see Chabbi (1989) and Signoles (1987);

[74] The *Ministère de l'Urbanisme* (Ministry of Urbanism) and the *Ministère des Travaux Publics et de l'Habitat* (Ministry of Public Works and Housing) were put in charge of devising a new spatial order for Tunis;

237). In addition, unprecedented investment in public housing construction[75] was to enable the relocation of those displaced by demolition orders to planned government housing built predominantly on expropriated agricultural land on the urban peripheries (Sethom 1995: 204). The build-up of the *Ibn Khaldoun* housing estate, the second urban project discussed in this chapter, was planned as a relocation site for an adjacent *gourbiville* and as a new model for public housing development that would integrate different social classes and privately-owned and social housing.

Second, urban modernisation efforts targeted itinerant trading and different forms of open-air *souks* that were considered "backward spaces without added value to the national economy" (Jemmali 1986: 54). As a migrant economy that was unaccommodated in planned marketplaces, the fripe trade was one of the backward forms of urban commerce that became the target of police repression and clearance campaigns. The open-air *souks* of Tunis had always functioned as crucial rural-urban interface and had attracted rural migrants as traders or day labourers, at times resulting in the emergence of settlements in their surroundings (Chérif 2006: 431). Since the colonial era, *souks* had thus been considered ungovernable spaces, triggering a policy of forced enclosure that resulted in the emergence of a dichotomy between the new market infrastructures – denominated with the French term "*marché"* – and the *souks* of the 'native population' (expanded upon in Chapter IV). The post-independence government re-enacted this dichotomy, initiating a policy of "*désoukalisation"*, that either forcibly enclosed and relocated, or violently dismantled, urban trading spaces that didn't correspond to the new planning and hygiene norms imposed (Berry-Chikhaoui 1994: 237). Police campaigns against itinerant traders – including many fripe vendors – were thus considered a crucial part of efforts to "educate those unfamiliar with the codes of behaviour of the city" (Berry-Chikhaoui et al. 2000: 17).

b. Constructing counter-histories of urban renewal

The two post-independence flagship projects in the *Hafsia* and *Ibn Khaldoun* are situated within this context of post-independence modernisation. Despite their ostensible differences, both projects were designed to break up dense "rural pockets in the city" (Abdelkafi 1986: 358), namely an overcrowded and impoverished quarter of the Tunis *medina* and one of the most ill-reputed *gourbivilles* of Tunis, *Djebel Lahmar,* and to juxtapose them with an entirely new urban environment. While the renewal projects thus nominally reproduced normative distinctions between 'the rural' and 'the urban', the counter-histories constructed in this chapter unsettle such neat differentiations. Instead, these counter-histories open up a more complex understanding of urban transformation: firstly, they focus on the agency of rural migrant traders as city-makers; secondly, they foreground marketplaces as spatial and social organising structures for these migrant constituencies; thirdly, in doing so, they position the fripe trade as part of the contingent processes of urban co-production that reshaped post-independence Tunis.

First, the counter-histories centre on rural migrant constituencies as city-makers, approaching them primarily as market-makers not as home builders and shifting the focus of inquiry from the edges of the city to renewal projects at the urban core. Writing on African cities has long emphasised the crucial role of "the rural" in the making and remaking of "the urban", often emphasising the role of self-builders of housing in shaping new forms of "suburbs" and thus processes of urbanisation on the edges of the city (Mercer 2017: 3). Research on the transformative effects of rural-urban migration to North African cities has also focused predominantly on informal, peripheral housing development (Berry-Chikhaoui et al. 2000; Deboulet 1994; Signoles et al. 2014). Similarly, in urban scholarship on Tunis, rural

[75] Public housing policies were now administered through the public housing agency *Société Nationale Immobilière de Tunisie* (SNIT);

migrants have mainly been considered as informal home-builders on the urban outskirts, accelerating the unauthorised build-up of agricultural land and urban sprawl (Chabbi 1986; Miossec 1999). The counter-histories in this chapter centre on the same migrant constituencies, but encounter them primarily as market-makers and traders in the fripe economy. While processes of auto-construction are similarly central to comprehending their role in city-making, empirical emphasis lies on collective efforts to consolidate physical market structures. In addition, by shifting the focus of inquiry from the urban peripheries to urban planning and renewal projects at the heart of post-independence Tunis, this account challenges the relegation of rural migrants to processes of 'informal city-making' or forms of "quiet encroachment" (Bayat 2010: 56, 60). While research on Tunis has examined the agency of rural migrants in reshaping nominally 'unplanned space' – such as the rapidly growing "*quartiers populaires"* (working-class areas) – this account traces their role in shaping the 'planned urban order' of central Tunis.

Second, this account's focus on collective processes of market building and consolidation foregrounds the role of 'marketplaces' as spatial and social ordering structures for migrant constituencies in the city. Examining the fripe as an urban trade that was never officially accommodated in urban planning, this account emphasises how market-making in the fripe required migrant traders to devise "cooperative hierarchies" (Keshavarzian 2007: 21) that became the basis for the shared organisation of economic circuits and physical trading spaces in post-independence Tunis. The counter-histories hence underline how specific forms of social organisation and collective identity-building amongst rural migrant traders in the fripe became inextricably linked to their capacities for market-making and thus their agency in co-producing urban space. This account extends urban scholarship that has investigated forms of rural migrant solidarity that draw both on "rural pasts" and "assertions of agency in the urban environment" (Zeiderman 2006: 213). Rather than reducing communal ties amongst rural migrants to pre-existing and fixed kinship ties, such literature has underlined the emergence of "urban kin arrangements" in cities (Pfirsch and Araos 2017: 4). Writing on urban trade has emphasised the importance of such variable forms of migrant identity as an "evolving organisational resource" (Gago 2017: 99) for occupying economic niches. Similarly, this chapter explores how a tribal identity originating in Tunisia's rural North-West took on a new signification in the urban fripe trade, serving as a basis for collective agency in city-making.

Third, this chapter shows how the blurred lines between official city-makers and encroachers come to the fore by exploring how migrant trader constituencies in the fripe became incorporated into renewal projects that nominally excluded them. This account therefore speaks to a long tradition of critical scholarship in urban studies that has advanced a conception of planning as a non-linear and contingent process of co-production that is always underpinned by political power structures (e.g. Bou Akar 2018; Fawaz 2014, 2017; Roy 2003). Such scholarship has demonstrated how abstract planning visions translate into a discontinuous implementation process, so that "the consolidation of planning remains messy and fraught with unanticipated twists and turns" (Simone 2016: 188). Planning projects thus often provide opportunities to seize and transform urban space for social constituencies originally disregarded as stakeholders of renewal (Berry-Chikhaoui and Deboulet 2000), or seen as unwanted populations to be displaced (Ghannam 2002). In a similar way, this account shows how two flagship urban renewal projects in post-independence Tunis translated into fragmented processes of urban change that resulted in forms of incorporation turning 'encroachers' into stakeholders. By positioning the fripe trade at the heart of these accounts of urban transformation, this chapter rewrites the history of two flagship projects whose official narratives have consistently obfuscated the role of migrant traders in turning them into 'success stories'.

To explore such micro-level agencies of city-making, the chapter relies primarily on extended life history interviews with migrant traders in the fripe economy, structured around four protagonists. Their stories cannot be read as 'exemplary' but must be engaged with as subjective renderings of how individual migrant trajectories became bound up with, and constitutive to, broader processes of urban change in Tunis. Close-up insight into differentiated agencies of city-making of different trader constituencies at the heart of the *Hafsia* and *Ibn Khaldoun* flagship projects foregrounds the necessarily singular social and political configurations that co-determined processes of space-making and their outcomes in different urban areas. Simultaneously, this method of constructing a counter-history positions rural migrants as agents of urban change in Tunis more broadly. It highlights how their distinct forms of economic and social organisation came to structure urban space and became constitutive to the contemporary urban order, including beyond these two flagship projects.

Constructing an alternative history of these two urban flagship projects required a careful reading of the subjective accounts of diverse fripe traders against a patchwork of other written and oral sources on the *Hafsia* and *Ibn Khaldoun* renewal projects and the ensuing processes of urban change. This meant connecting the dots and reading between the lines, tracing back how particular project components or time gaps provided openings for participation or cooperation. In addition, interviews with official stakeholders of renewal – from architects to local decision-makers – helped to contrast the fripe traders' viewpoints, and to either triangulate or contradict information gained from traders. The resulting counter-histories are characterised by gaps and contradictions that are rendered explicit in this final text. Making no claims to completeness or neutrality, they should be read as partial in their quest to trace how two flagship projects provided the grounds for incorporating stigmatised social groups and their 'poverty trade' into processes of urban change at the heart of the capital city.

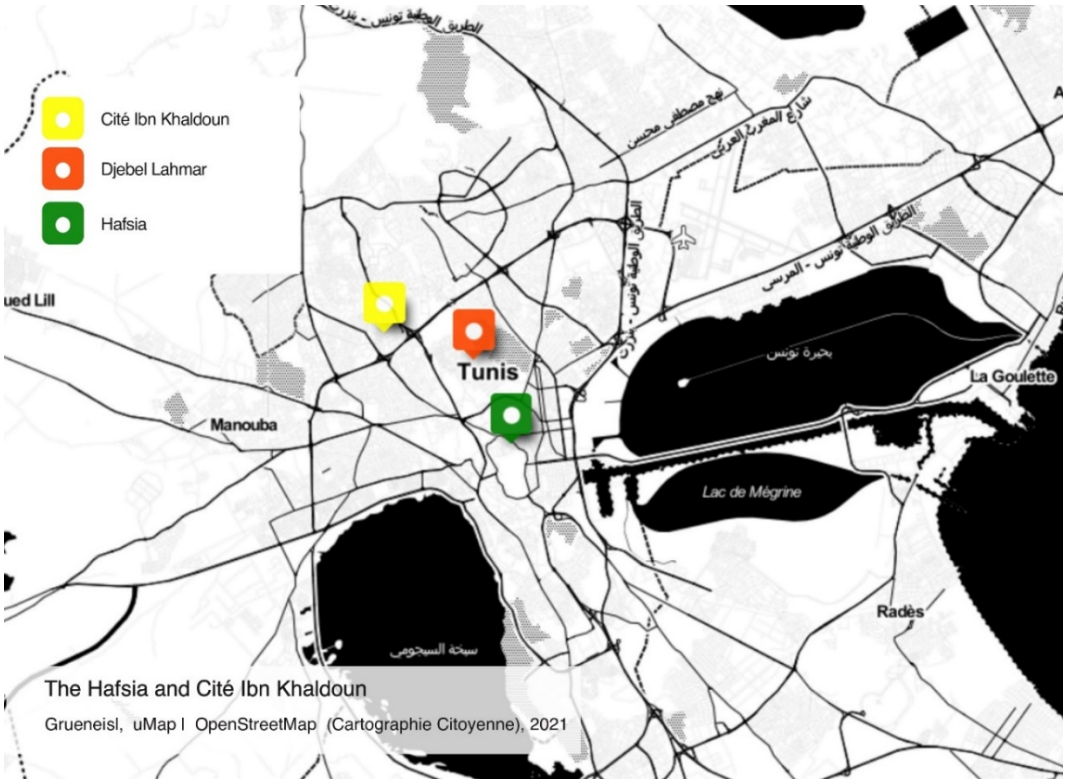

Figure II.1 The two urban renewal sites and the former *gourbiville* of *Djebel Lahmar*

2. Two incomplete flagship projects and the production of urban interstices

This section examines the onset of two of the most prominent urban renewal projects of post-independence Tunis that inadvertently became the sites for the consolidation of the first permanent fripe markets in the capital city. Both the rehabilitation of the historic *Hafsia* quarter in the Tunis *medina* and the construction of the model housing estate *Ibn Khaldoun* on a hill top North of the city centre were intended to intervene in urban areas that were perceived as emblematic of urban poverty and a "new form of undesirable cultural diversity" (Sethom 1995: 199) resulting from the settlement of rural migrants. While in the *Hafsia,* emphasis lay on rapid demolition and reconstruction, the new *Ibn Khaldoun* estate was comprehensively planned as new urban neighbourhood that would become a resettlement location for inhabitants of the adjacent *gourbiville Djebel Lahmar* (Darde 1955).

The section sets out the imperfect translation of initial planning visions into urban interventions in the *Hafsia* and *Ibn Khaldoun,* showing how both renewal projects in fact paid little or no regard to the existing forms of order which they were designed to replace. The confrontation of planning visions with diverse geographical, financial and political constraints rapidly thwarted initial plans, resulting in a discontinuous and incomplete implementation process. This produced temporal gaps between different phases of project implementation and physical openings in the – new and old – urban fabric. The incomplete renewal interventions thus unintentionally opened up opportunities for market building at the core of the two renewal sites by migrant constituencies earning a living as fripe traders.

a. The *Hafsia:* Emergency intervention and the creation of a 'hole' in the urban fabric

While the entire Tunis *medina* had suffered from systemic neglect under the French protectorate, the *Hafsia* quarter, part of which formed part of the former Jewish "ghetto" – called the "*hara"* – of Tunis (Sebag 1959: 9), was particularly notorious for its slum-like living conditions and the extreme degradation of its built environment. As a hotbed of urban poverty and arrival site for impoverished migrants in the heart of the city, the *Hara-Hafsia* constituted a priority for state intervention post-independence, triggering rapid emergency demolitions and subsequent disagreement about the future of the historic area and its inhabitants. In the process, a temporal gap in renewal operations and a physical gap – in the form of a large hole in the urban fabric created through demolitions – provided unanticipated opportunities for space-making to fripe traders whose presence in the neighbourhood had been completely disregarded in the renewal plans.

From Jewish ghetto to arrival site for rural migrants in the inner-city

The Jewish *hara* (ghetto) dates back to the 10th century, when the patron saint of Tunis, *Sidi Mehrez,* is said to have attributed a confined but unwalled quarter of the Tunis *medina* to the city's Jewish population (Abdelkafi 2017: 73). Consecutive waves of immigration, consisting of Jews fleeing persecution in Europe during the 14th and 15th century, but also of wealthy Jewish traders from Leghorn, soon caused severe overpopulation in the Jewish ghetto (Sebag 1959: 13). By the mid-19th century, a growing schism between the predominantly working-class Tunisian Jewish population and wealthier European Jewish immigrants had emerged, and overcrowding pushed many Jewish families to acquire property in the adjacent *Hafsia* neighbourhood, resulting in the denomination *Hara-Hafsia.* With the onset of the French protectorate, many wealthier Jewish families left the dilapidated former ghetto and moved to the colonial-era quarters (Hagège and Zarca 2001: 25). The departure of most Jewish

inhabitants of Tunis after independence meant that the *Hara-Hafsia* had lost most of its original population by the 1960s (Ben Achour 2019; Memmi 2015).

Instead, the urban poor of all confessions moved into the *Hara-Hafsia,* which began to be described as a "*quartier insalubre"* (slum) from as early as 1918 (Sebag 1959: 21). At the time, a report by the protectorate authorities highlighted the appalling hygiene conditions in the *Hara-Hafsia*, initiating a sanitization reform that resulted in widespread expropriations between 1918 and 1928 and first demolitions in the area (Abdelkafi 1986: 530). 400 families were relocated to a row of newly constructed five-storey apartment blocks in 1939, but the outbreak of the war interrupted the renewal operations, leaving behind an empty patch of land in the midst of the *Hafsia* (Sebag 1959: 26). While local inhabitants mobilised in a "defence committee" after the war to protest the lack of compensation for expropriations and halt further demolitions, their appeals remained unsuccessful and a public hygiene commission reconfirmed the need to raze the entire neighbourhood (ibid: 29).

When demolitions resumed in 1961 in the form of an 'emergency intervention' by the Ministry of Public Works, the social fabric of the *medina* had changed dramatically: radical demographic changes in post-independence Tunis triggered an unprecedented concentration of poor rural migrants in the dilapidated *medina* (Signoles 1987: 505) and historic houses were now rented out room by room to impoverished migrant families, a phenomenon described as "*oukalisation*"[76] that triggered further degradation and overcrowding (Lafi 2017: 52) Particularly for young men arriving in the capital in search of work, the *Hafsia* became a crucial access point to the city, as it offered cheap rental accommodation and an unparalleled "density of opportunities*"*, especially informal work in and around the *souks* of the *medina* (Berry-Chikhaoui 1994: 448).

Demolitions and disagreements: emptying out the core of the neighbourhood

The new wave of demolitions targeted not only the remaining housing of the *Hara* but also historic market infrastructures, like the "*Souk El Hout",* which was completely demolished in 1962 (Abdelkafi 1986: 534). Resembling renewal operations elsewhere in the *medina* at the time, the 'emergency intervention' was underpinned by "hard lines between the modern and the backward" and by a focus on rapid demolition and reconstruction (Vasile 1997: 119). Standardised housing blocks were to replace the deteriorated historic housing and the dense urban fabric was to give way to a grid-like plan adapted to car-based mobility. The continuation of demolitions – largely on land already expropriated by the municipality before World War II – thus displaced not only local inhabitants but also diverse traders, including shop owners from the historic covered *souk* and a large number of itinerant vendors who had appropriated the empty patch of land in the midst of the *Hara-Hafsia*. Especially used good traders and door-to-door collectors of "*ruba fikia"* (second-hand clothes) had brought their merchandise to the dusty open grounds, as they lay on a strategic axis between two major *souks* of the Tunis *medina* and many of the poor local inhabitants bought from what began to be referred to as "*marché aux puces"* (flea market) (Abdelkafi 1986: 531).

By 1963, the relentless destruction of the city's historic inner-city triggered mounting resistance. Evicted residents staged protests to claim compensation or in situ relocation and architects and urbanists mobilised to protect the city's unique built heritage. When *Hassib Ben Ammar* assumed office as mayor of Tunis in 1963, the latter faction won a powerful ally. As a consequence, plans to dissect the *medina*

[76] The term "*oukala*" came to describe the renting out of individual rooms to workers and families; by 1968, 65% of household heads in the Tunis medina were born in rural areas and 30% of all houses were occupied by 4–12 families;

with large access roads were averted and demolition operations were gradually suspended, including those in the *Hara-Hafsia*[77]. The ancient *Hara* had however already been destroyed by the time demolitions were halted, leaving behind a gaping 'hole' – or rather a large field of dust and rubble – at the former centre of the historic neighbourhood (Abdelkafi 1986: 535). Ensuing discussions about alternative approaches to the rehabilitation of the Tunis *medina* culminated in the foundation of the *Association de la Sauvegarde de la Medina* (ASM) (Association for the Preservation of the *Medina*) in 1967. In the same year, the mayor commissioned a multi-disciplinary team of architects, urbanists and researchers to elaborate a large-scale rehabilitation scheme for the *Hafsia*. In the duration between the stalling of demolitions and the elaboration of alternative rehabilitation plans, the physical opening that had emerged through the emergency interventions in the dense urban fabric provided unanticipated opportunities for space-making for those displaced or disregarded by the renewal operations.

b. *Ibn Khaldoun:* From model housing estate to incomplete resettlement location

The *Cité Ibn Khaldoun* was never planned as just another public housing estate, or what was referred to as "*cités populaires programmés*" (Tayachi 1988) in post-independence Tunis. Rather, the estate was conceptualised as autonomous "city within the city" (Ben Medien 2006) that could accommodate diverse social classes and would become a replicable model for a new public housing policy across Tunisia. Named after the Tunisian historian *Ibn Khaldoun,* who had researched the transition from rural to urban society in the 14th century, the flagship project was designed to educate rural migrants to a new "*citadinité"* (urban citizenship) by integrating them alongside urban middle-classes into a communal living environment. *Ibn Khaldoun* was thus intentionally planned on a hill top just North of one of the most notorious *gourbivilles* of Tunis, *Djebel Lahmar,* and was to become a resettlement location for some of its burgeoning population. In reality however, the visionary plans for the model estate as a self-contained urban quarter never materialised. Far fewer people than initially envisaged were relocated, and an exclusive focus on housing production resulted in the creation of a residential estate with an empty core.

From the gourbiville to the model estate: planning for the transition from rural to urban life

By the time plans for the *Cité* (estate) of *Ibn Khaldoun* were unveiled in the early 1970s, the government had abandoned attempts to demolish the city's sprawling *gourbivilles* and the auto-constructed quarters became consolidated, with the initial "*gourbis"* (shacks) giving way to reinforced brick and concrete housing (Chabbi 1989: 261). The flagship project *Cité Ibn Khaldoun* was designed to mark a rupture with earlier policies of demolition and relocation: planned as an autonomously functioning mixed-use environment, *Cité Ibn Khaldoun* was envisioned as a new type of housing project that would remedy the segregated urban landscapes inherited by colonialism and produce social harmony (Ben Medien 2006). A combination of social housing for relocated families and middle-class housing sold on the private market not only promised to cross-finance the overall project, it also guaranteed "*mixité sociale*" ("social mixing"), through the integration of resettled rural migrants with their middle-class neighbours (Ben Slimane 1995: 268). Reflecting the goal to produce a replicable urban model that could appeal to all Tunisians irrespective of social class and origin, the estate's architecture and urban design intentionally mimicked the Tunis *medina* and thus allegedly the most "authentic" form of urban living (Ben Medien 2003, 2006). While anachronistically developed by a French lead architect, 'traditional

[77] Appendix I, Interview 31;

architectural elements' like the central patio or small neighbourhood units were integrated into the estate's design to allow for a "reconciliation with a traditional way of life" (Ben Slimane 1995: 266).

Designed as a relocation site for *Djebel Lahmar*, one of the oldest and largest *gourbivilles* of Tunis (Sebag 1960: 8), the direct spatial juxtaposition of the newly planned *Ibn Khaldoun* estate with the dense and dilapidated area was intentional. Since the first *gourbis* had been erected on the steep hillside to the North of the Tunis *medina* – that came to be called "*Djebel al-Ahmar"* ("the red mountain") due to its red soil – during the 1930s, the area had turned into an emblem for poverty and crime (ibid). While a census from 1943 counted just 6000 people living in *Djebel Lahmar,* its population had increased to 23,100 at independence (Abdelkafi 1986: 206). By the 1970s, the auto-constructed quarter had developed into one of the most populous informal settlements of central Tunis, inhabited by consecutive waves of rural migrants originating mainly in Tunisia's North-West[78] (Berry-Chikhaoui 1994: 67). Shared origins and kinship – mainly identified with the "*'arsh"* (clan) or "*qabila"* (tribe) of "*Ayar"* – thus played an important role in the social and economic organisation of the neighbourhood. While kinship networks and communal ties had in fact gained new importance in the dense and harsh urban living environment of *Djebel Lahmar,* the authorities considered such "dominant tribal identities" as both security threat and dangerous remnant of 'rurality' highlighting the urgency of intervention (Sebag 1960: 77–81).

Creating a housing estate with an empty core

The public housing agency SNIT, which was put in charge of constructing the *Ibn Khaldoun* estate, was a technical agency focused on the rapid and cheap delivery of government housing and thus had little regard for lofty planning visions. Accordingly, the agency focused on the rapid development of a maximum number of housing units in *Ibn Khaldoun*, building on earlier experiences of government housing provision. In the first phase, between 1972 and 1974, the engineers and construction experts of the SNIT finalised 1500 out of 5000 housing units. Unexpected costs, in part linked to building materials and the difficult hilly terrain, meant that the SNIT urgently needed to sell housing units for a profitable price on the private market to launch the second phase of the project[79]. Exclusive priority was thus given to housing construction, and most units were reserved for sale on the private market and were thus destined for the upwardly-mobile urban middle classes. The disproportionate focus on housing production in the implementation process of the *Ibn Khaldoun* estate produced a spatial reality that differed markedly from original planning documents. Most importantly, what had been planned as "*centre urbain principal"* (main urban centre) with public facilities, services and commercial offer remained completely unbuilt by the time relocation from *Djebel Lahmar* started (Ben Slimane 1995: 266).

Application for relocation to *Ibn Khaldoun* took place on a purely voluntary basis and only a small proportion of families from *Djebel Lahmar* that wished to transfer to the modern estate could in fact be resettled. Between 1972 and 1973, 1400 applications for relocation from *Djebel Lahmar* to social housing in *Ibn Khaldoun* had been approved and registration was subsequently closed (ibid: 267). While resettlement to *Cité Ibn Khaldoun* had been envisioned as a seamless integration into an autonomously functioning neighbourhood, the first families relocated from *Djebel Lahmar* in fact found themselves in an unfinished housing estate with an empty core. While the housing units themselves were completed

[78] By 1984, 43,6% of all migrants in the capital city came from Tunisia's North-West, the area most heavily affected by colonial land expropriations and the attempted collectivization of Tunisian agriculture during the 1960s, see King (2003) for a detailed discussion;

[79] Appendix I, Interview 32;

and linked to basic infrastructure, the estate lacked communal facilities and commercial offer, and vast patches of empty land characterised the neighbourhood (Ben Medien 2003). Mirroring imaginaries of 'modern urban lifestyles' based on car-based mobility, the *Ibn Khaldoun* estate was connected exclusively through roads to the rest of the city, accommodating the car-owning middle-classes whose urban lives were based on a strict spatial separation of work, home and leisure (ibid).

While the *Ibn Khaldoun* housing estate had been intentionally designed to help those relocated from the *gourbivilles* to "adapt to a more sophisticated lifestyle" (Ben Slimane 1995: 269), the unfinished character of the neighbourhood and the complete lack of a walkable mixed-use environment effectively isolated resettled families from their social and economic lives in the city. The incomplete housing estate thus confronted resettled families from *Djebel Lahmar* with significant challenges, but also inadvertently produced new opportunities for space-making that hadn't been foreseen in initial planning documents.

3. Migrant traders as market-makers: shaping collective identities and urban space

The stalled renewal operations in the *Hafsia* and incomplete urban development in *Ibn Khaldoun* resulted in empty patches of urban land – located at the core of both neighbourhoods – that allowed for unanticipated processes of auto-construction. In the *Hafsia,* rural migrants who had been making a precarious living as itinerant fripe vendors and were periodically dispersed by the police, seized the centrally located 'hole' that had emerged in the urban fabric. In *Ibn Khaldoun*, rural migrant families resettled from *Djebel Lahmar* who found themselves cut off from former employment opportunities, began to auto-construct a fresh food and fripe market at the empty core of the housing estate.

To explore how different constituencies of rural migrants succeeded in consolidating the first permanent fripe marketplaces of the capital city at the heart of the *Hafsia* and *Ibn Khaldoun* renewal projects, the following sections centre on the trajectories of particular fripe traders who became integral agents of the urban change processes that transformed the two neighbourhoods. They trace shared processes of market-making, comprising both the joint establishment and consolidation of market infrastructures and their embedding in broader circuits of the urban fripe economy. Such processes of market-making were both underpinned by – and in turn reinforced – forms of social organisation and collective identity amongst rural migrants who built urban livelihoods through the fripe trade. Such nuanced modes of spatial and social organisation lastingly transformed both the *Hafsia* and *Ibn Khaldoun* neighbourhood, as well as the positioning of migrant trader constituencies at the heart of the two renewal sites.

a. Transforming the 'hole' of the *Hafsia* into the first permanent fripe market of Tunis

In the time gap between the halting of demolitions in the *Hafsia* in the early 1960s and the resumption of urban renewal almost ten years later, traders occupied the 'hole' produced in the area's dense urban fabric and transformed it into the first permanent fripe marketplace of Tunis. Denominated "*souk Kennedy"*, the *Hafsia* market rapidly transformed into a major point of attraction in central Tunis. Most of the traders involved in the auto-construction and gradual consolidation of the marketplace came to the *Hafsia* in search of work and cheap accommodation and had migrated to the capital from all over Tunisia. Despite diverse origins and a lack of pre-existing social ties amongst traders, the shared occupation of the trading grounds and their transformation into a specialised fripe marketplace generated a "compendium of shared knowledge" (Gago 2017: 99) that created lasting bonds amongst

the *Hafsia* traders and enhanced their capacity to endure and gradually improve their positioning at the heart of the renewal site.

From ephemeral appropriations to the consolidation of a marketplace

Hamadi[80], who was subletting a cheap room in one of the *oukalas* of the *Hafsia* with several other young men from his home village close to Jendouba in the early 1960s, remembers how "the hole of the *Hafsia",* as they used to call it, was rapidly occupied by itinerant traders. Hamadi earned an irregular income as a day labourer on construction sites, but often struggled to find work and was thus forced to complement his income by trading *ruba fikia* on the fringes of the nearby *Halfaouine* square. Living directly adjacent to the demolition grounds, Hamadi observed how traders who had been displaced from the demolished *Souk El Hout* and other itinerant vendors from the central city encroached upon the empty patch of land to sell their wares. He recounts that those trading in fripe and "*brocante"* (used goods) rapidly clustered next to the *Sidi Sridek* market for fresh produce. A pre-existing cluster of shops selling fripe in the *Hafsia* (Sebag 1959: 11) accelerated the emergence of a specialised used clothing section on the appropriated trading grounds, creating an informal, open-air extension of the existing textile trading centre in *Souk El-Grana*[81].

As Hamadi faced constant police harassment as an itinerant trader, the open grounds provided a unique opportunity for him to occupy a permanent trading space. As he recounts, he arrived, "when there was still a lot of empty space, just rubble and sand (…). I knew some of the other fripe vendors from nearby, they were also renting rooms in the neighbourhood*",* Hamadi explains, "so I joined them, I just added my (linen) sheet on the ground and started selling there". Most of the traders were young men like Hamadi, who had arrived from across Tunisia in search of work, with no material resources nor the necessary skills required for the urban labour market. Hamadi laughs as he remembers the different accents spoken on the fripe trading grounds, and remarks that "we all looked different and spoke in different ways, but we now lived together and traded together in the *Hafsia*". Hamadi explains how the precarious occupation of the trading grounds immediately persuaded the traders to collaborate. To make sure the trading spaces wouldn't be seized by other traders or the authorities overnight, they began to take turns guarding "the field". Hamadi vividly remembers the nights spent alongside other young men on the trading grounds, playing cards, drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes.

On a photo taken 7 years later, in 1970, fripe traders have fully occupied the 'hole' of the *Hafsia*, offering their wares on the ground and sitting under haphazardly erected structures that provide protection against the sun (reproduced in Abdelkafi 2017: 79). In the background, auto-constructed shacks are visible that functioned both as fripe shop spaces and as storages for the fripe bales that supplied the different traders in the square (ibid). As Hamadi explains, the transformation of the open trading grounds into an auto-constructed marketplace consisting of wooden stall structures occurred incrementally and started with the erection of shared storage infrastructures. While the ASM was thus elaborating alternative proposals for urban renewal in the *Hafsia,* the fripe traders gradually consolidated their marketplace.

[80] Appendix II. Interlocutor 2;
[81] The textile market was named after the "Grana", a denomination given to Jewish traders from Leghorn settling in the Tunis *hara* (ghetto) from the 17th century;

Figure II.2 The *Hafsia* fripe market in 1970, reproduced from Abdelkafi (2017: 79)

Migrant solidarities and the organisation of a specialised fripe marketplace

The consolidation of the fripe market not only depended on a gradual reinforcement of stall structures, but also on the transformation of the "physical space" of the market into a "social space of cooperation" (Keshavarzian 2007: 21). Reflecting the *Hafsia's* status as an arrival site for rural migrants from across Tunisia, the diversity of origins amongst traders in the square was remarkable. As Hamadi stresses, it was thus the shared experience of living in the crammed *oukalas* of the inner-city and of being excluded from the city's formal labour market that created common stakes in consolidating the marketplace amongst the young migrant traders. "We knew this was our only chance*",* Hamadi remembers, "there weren't many opportunities for us, many of us had struggled for years without proper income."

In addition to the joint protection of the appropriated trading grounds and their step-by-step physical reinforcement into a built-up marketplace, the fripe traders joined forces to position themselves in the rapidly developing urban fripe trade. Already in 1964, shortly after the appropriation of the demolition grounds, the fripe traders began to devise a shared system for receiving fripe merchandise. The goal of the traders was to apply for "*bons d'achats"* (purchasing vouchers) that would allow them to receive fripe merchandise directly from the two sorting factories that had begun to import second-hand civilian clothing from the United States (Van Groen and Lozer 1976: 9, 16). Over 100 fripe traders in the *Hafsia* registered and applied collectively for purchasing vouchers from the Ministry of Commerce, with some of the more established shop owners leading negotiations. The traders' success in ensuring direct supplies without intermediaries and in thereby obtaining a de-facto regularisation of their trade was crucial to the subsequent success of the *Hafsia* fripe market. Once regular, joint supplies had been organised, Hamadi explains, other mechanisms of coordination fell in place almost automatically. Especially those without permanent shops or starting capital pooled resources for purchasing fripe bales, constructed common storage infrastructures and helped one another with the incremental improvement of their stall spaces. The joint organisation of fripe deliveries and distribution thus welded

together the traders into what Hamadi evokes as a form of "*arushiya"* (clan-based solidarity) – a term usually evoked for kinship-based solidarity –, which in turn reinforced the traders' clout within the fripe economy and vis-à-vis the authorities.

At the same time, the social ordering mechanisms emerging in the marketplace reproduced stark hierarchies amongst different constituencies of migrant traders. Fripe traders with pre-existing shops in the *Hafsia* who led negotiations with importers were especially quick to expand their control over the open trading grounds, positioning family members or employees strategically in the market and later joining the profitable wholesale business. While traders like Hamadi possessed nothing but their stall spaces and were thus in a weaker position, they had formed lasting alliances amongst each other that allowed them to secure their permanent trading positions and construct stable livelihoods on this basis. Subsequent generations of young migrants who arrived in the market in search of work and shelter occupied the lowest position in the emerging trader hierarchy. Najib[82] was only 16 years old when he arrived in Tunis in spring 1972, having escaped his family farm near Siliana after a fallout with his father. Getting off the train without money, contacts or previous knowledge of the capital city, he was directed to the *Hafsia* market by other young migrants. At first, Najib began to help with fruit and vegetable deliveries in the adjacent *Sidi Sridek* market, and was sleeping rough. Through a chance encounter with an acquaintance from his village, who had seized a trading space in the fripe market, Najib then found work in the marketplace. He slept under the market stall to guard the merchandise overnight and worked as a shop assistant for the trader during the day.

For consecutive generations of migrants, the fripe marketplace in the *Hafsia* thus became an access point to the city and a stable centre around which social and economic lives could be structured, albeit from highly divergent starting positions. Those who were able to seize permanent trading spaces in the *Hafsia* achieved the most significant social ascension: by 1975, Hamadi had not only fortified his market stall with a corrugated iron roof and a lockable barrack, he had also set aside savings that allowed him to leave his dilapidated room in the *Hafsia* and rent an apartment for himself and his wife, who originated from the same village and joined him in Tunis after their wedding. As Hamadi's and Najib's accounts underline, the *Hafsia* fripe market represented far more than a mere income source to rural migrants arriving in the capital. Rather, the marketplace provided both a stable work space and dense social networks that became the basis for diverse support systems, turning it into "a common resource and institution" (Monteith 2018: 7) that became the centre of the migrants' urban lives. This is reflected in the assertion of a collective identity as "fripe vendors of the *Hafsia"* by both Hamadi and Najib, which is underpinned by feelings of pride for having established and consolidated the oldest fripe market of Tunis. Especially for the first generation of traders like Hamadi – most of whom have now passed on their stalls to younger family members – the story of how they turned a field of rubble into a flourishing fripe market also served as an affirmation of their legitimacy on squatted, municipal land. It thus came to play a crucial role in defending their presence and confronting the authorities by the time rehabilitation operations were resumed in the *Hafsia* by the mid-1970s.

b. Market-making in a middle-class estate: establishing an urban core in *Ibn Khaldoun*

When the first families from *Djebel Lahmar* were resettled to *Ibn Khaldoun* in the mid-1970s, what had been planned as a self-sufficient "city within the city" in fact resembled a peripheral housing development with an empty core, destined to become a mere "*dortoir*" ("dormitory") for its inhabitants

[82]Appendix II. Interlocutor 1;

(Ben Medien 2003). While this accommodated the lifestyles of a car-owning middle class that had purchased private housing in the estate but worked and shopped elsewhere, resettled families from *Djebel Lahmar* found themselves isolated from the rest of the city and cut off from vital income-earning opportunities and social networks.

In response to the challenges posed by the incomplete built environment, a group of men from *Djebel Lahmar* began to auto-construct a marketplace on a site originally earmarked for public facilities in *Ibn Khaldoun*. Benefitting from a quasi-monopoly over local supplies, the marketplace rapidly turned into the missing 'centre' of the estate. It reconstituted a sense of "*houma"*, the Tunisian Arabic term used to describe "a sort of semi-public, semiprivate domestic space characterised by intense, day-to-day exchanges" (Clancy-Smith 2012: 36), for resettled families. Those involved in market-making gradually rebuilt livelihoods centred around their auto-constructed stalls, and the portioning of the marketplace into specialised sub-sections translated into new forms of communal organisation. The following account hones in on a particular lineage of fripe traders to examine how they mobilised the notion of kinship – and particularly an assertion of their identity as "*Wulad Ayar"* (lit. sons of Ayar)[83]- for jointly organising their trading space and for subsequently expanding their influence from the inconspicuous *Ibn Khaldoun* marketplace to weekly *souks* across Tunis.

Relocation and disruption: rebuilding livelihoods through market-making

Adel[84], today in his late 50s, grew up in *Djebel Lahmar* and was a teenager when his family relocated to the *Ibn Khaldoun* estate. He remembers that it felt as if someone had moved them "into nowhere (…), away from our neighbours and friends". For Adel's family, the move marked a considerable improvement in housing conditions, but also came with a whole series of challenges. While Adel quickly made new friends with other boys resettled from *Djebel Lahmar* and remembers playing football in the vast open spaces of the new estate, his mother was uprooted from her social environment and could no longer complete her daily chores on foot or visit family and neighbours. Adel's father, who, like most inhabitants of *Djebel Lahmar,* had no "*khidma rasmiya"* (official work), had earned the family income as a day labourer and trader in the markets of the central city. Like other male breadwinners, he now struggled to commute to and from the city centre due to a lack of public transport connections.

As has been the case in resettlement sites in diverse contexts, gradual processes of "auto-construction and alteration" (Ghannam 1998: 266) played a crucial role in appropriating the alien living environment and in rebuilding livelihoods in the unfinished estate. Soon after relocation, Adel's father and other men relocated originally from *Djebel Lahmar* began to set up improvised market stalls adjacent to the unfinished youth centre at the empty core of the housing estate. Adel remembers helping his father with the construction, and proudly recounts that they were the first to erect a roofed, wooden market stall at the centre of the empty plot. Devoid of any public infrastructure, the traders had to gradually connect the site to water, sewage and, later, electricity, and established a system of cost sharing as well as communal tasks, especially for waste collection in an area that wasn't regularly served by the municipality. Most of the traders setting up stalls had decided to supply the estate with fresh produce, at first fruit and vegetables, and later, meat and other animal products as surrounding housing units were gradually transformed into shop spaces. A few traders, amongst them Adel's father, decided to trade in fripe as they had experience in used clothes trading from the markets of the central city. Adel's

[83] The *Wulad Ayar* are the dominant kinship group in Tunisia's North-Western region, located mainly between the cities of El Kef and Makthar;
[84] Appendix II. Interlocutor 3;

father had often worked on hire for wholesalers or well-positioned traders in the *Hafsia,* who needed someone to resell their leftover merchandise on the market peripheries. From age 10, Adel had followed his father around different Tunis marketplaces, reselling used garments and shoes on large cotton sheets on the ground.

Due to the complete absence of commercial offer apart from a supermarket in the lower part of the housing estate, the auto-constructed marketplace in the middle of *Ibn Khaldoun* proved an immediate success. In addition to offering affordable supplies and income-earning opportunities for those resettled, the market rapidly turned into what Adel describes as "*woust al-houma"* ("the centre of the neighbourhood"), imparting a sense of communal life on the otherwise anonymous living environment. Located at the highest point of the neighbourhood, the *souk* granted a degree of continuity with neighbourhood life in *Djebel Lahmar*, particularly for women for whom the marketplace constituted a vital space of encounter in a neighbourhood that often made them feel out of place as it was predominantly geared to a wealthier social class [85]. The market also turned into an important point of connection with *Djebel Lahmar* as young men came to sell supplies like home-baked bread and other products still unavailable in the new estate.

Rather than merely satisfying immediate socio-economic needs, the marketplace demonstrated how "auto-construction can transform the resettlement project" (Ghannam 1998: 277). The market altered the character of *Ibn Khaldoun* from a "*cité"* (estate) – describing a rationally planned housing project (Ben Medien 2004) – to a *houma,* designating a lived urban neighbourhood unit. The joint organisation of the marketplace did not merely build on existing communal ties from *Djebel Lahmar,* but also favoured the emergence of new social networks and solidarities born out of the shared experience of both resettlement and market-making.

Kinship solidarities and the expansion of trading networks across the city

While some of the traders in the newly established marketplace were close relatives or former neighbours from *Djebel Lahmar*, others got to know each other in the process of setting up the market. This shared experience forged bonds amongst the traders and, as Adel explains, the sense of being "different" from the estate's middle-class inhabitants reinforced such feelings of solidarity: "neighbours were looking at us, it was clear they were afraid or didn't want us here (…), so this made us stick together when we came to *Ibn Khaldoun".* He adds, "we were *Wulad Ayar*, from the same *"arsh"* (clan)". While Adel's family migrated to Tunis from Makthar in Tunisia's North-West and his father thus linked memories of his rural origins and local traditions to the lineage of the *Ayar*, other fripe traders in *Ibn Khaldoun* did not share the same origins or were indeed born in the capital city. Nevertheless, evoking clan-based solidarity – "*arushiya" [86]* – became a powerful mechanism for asserting a group identity amongst the fripe traders, a precondition to expanding their influence beyond the confined marketplace.

Similar to the fripe market in the *Hafsia,* the traders' success in *Ibn Khaldoun* hinged on their capacity to organise purchases and deliveries collectively. As the eldest son, Adel joined his father in the market when he was just 15 and recounts the strong local demand for used clothes and shoes that encouraged more and more traders to switch from fresh produce to fripe trading. Not only men residing in the estate, also family members who were still living in *Djebel Lahmar,* like Adel's older cousin Slim[87], joined

[85] Conversation with the mother of a main interlocutor, see Appendix II. Interlocutor 3;
[86] The Arabic term "'*asabiya*" to denote tribal solidarity is also used, but is less prevalent in the Tunisian context;
[87] Appendix II. Interlocutor 4;

the cluster of fripe stalls that formed on one side of the marketplace. Due to his pre-existing contacts with wholesalers in the *Hafsia,* Adel's father assumed a leadership role amongst the *Ibn Khaldoun* fripe traders and initiated the joint renting of garages for storage and the shared investment in an old pick-up truck for weekly deliveries. While such shared infrastructures at first simply reduced costs and improved supplies of the local marketplace, the fripe traders rapidly built on their effective collaboration and centrally located storage infrastructures to begin trading in *"aswak isbouaiya"* (weekly markets) all over the capital city. Especially young men, like Adel and his cousin Slim, soon began to tour the weekly markets with the pick-up truck on six out of seven days a week, often bringing along tents or sleeping on the fripe bales in the marketplaces overnight to set up their stalls again early in the morning.

By the early 1980s, the *Ibn Khaldoun* traders had established a prominent presence in weekly *souks* all over the peripheries of Tunis and had turned the fripe trade into a "*commerce familial*" (family business), with tight-knit social networks and clan-based solidarities making entry difficult to outsiders (Jemmali 1986: 137). Slim affirms that shop assistants or transporters were usually recruited from the extended family or from *Djebel Lahmar,* because, as he puts it, "the *Wulad Ayar* are clever trading people, it is in our blood as we were always *"tujjar"* (traders)*."* Both his narrative of a shared past as 'traders' and the identification of all workers in the fripe market as "*Ayari"* point to the new meaning kinship and tribal belonging acquired in the fripe trade. Particularly amongst second generation migrants, like Adel and Slim, the identification as "*Ayari"* emerged from the "shared experience of migration and urban living" (Gago 2017: 80) and especially the experience of growing up as descendants of rural migrants in *Djebel Lahmar.* The attempt to jointly occupy a part of the urban fripe market added to the importance of evoking and "reinventing" (ibid: 99) a shared base of identity, as different tribal and regional identities had ordered urban trades in the capital city since the 19th century (Clancy-Smith 2012: 135). In addition, the hostile environment of the middle-class estate reinforced the need for a positive assertion of group identity amongst young migrant traders. Identifying as "*Ayari"* thus became "an affirmation of modernity, not a manifestation of tradition" (Miller 2009: 388, 392) and was tied to tacit forms of knowledge and codes of language and behaviour that came to govern the fripe *souks* of Tunis.

While resettlement to *Ibn Khaldoun* had been underpinned by a vision of assimilation that would dispel the forms of 'backward' communal ties deemed characteristic of *gourbivilles* like *Djebel Lahmar*, the fripe traders mobilised clan-based solidarity as a powerful organisational resource for expanding control over the urban fripe trade. The traders of *Ibn Khaldoun* – only a small proportion of whom were actually residing in the estate – thus rapidly gained notoriety as a powerful group of traders with considerable influence beyond their neighbourhood market. What looked like a haphazardly built marketplace at the core of the *Ibn Khaldoun* estate thus in fact formed the basis for city-wide fripe trading networks, foreclosing attempted relocation and conferring substantial clout to the fripe traders in consecutive phases of urban renewal.

4. The fripe traders as unlikely stakeholders in the 'completion' of renewal

Different migrant trader constituencies had thus succeeded in consolidating the first permanent fripe marketplaces at the heart of the *Hafsia* and *Ibn Khaldoun* neighbourhood, and had thereby positioned themselves in wider economic circuits of the urban fripe trade. While the *Hafsia* had thus turned into the main wholesale quarter for the fripe trade, *Ibn Khaldoun* now formed the distribution hub for fripe merchandise across all weekly *souks* of Tunis. When the second phase of urban rehabilitation resumed in the *Hafsia* in the mid-1970s, the authorities perceived the fripe traders as unwanted squatters and

thus declared the demolition and relocation of the fripe market as a precondition to renewal. Similarly, when socio-economic crisis escalating into riots in 1984 prompted the government to resume its intervention in the unfinished *Ibn Khaldoun* estate, the auto-constructed fripe marketplace at its core became an immediate target of the security forces because it was seen as an emblem for the 'anarchy' that reigned in the neighbourhood. While renewed state intervention in the *Hafsia* and *Ibn Khaldoun* thus first resulted in open confrontation between the authorities and the fripe traders, the following sections explore how these relations subsequently transformed and resulted in diverse forms of incorporation and co-production that reshaped the renewal sites.

As this close-up look at the second phase of state intervention demonstrates, changing political conjunctures and new economic priorities had resulted in the "incremental emptying of planning of its former socio-economic objectives" (Bou Akar 2018: 147). Plans for profitable real estate development and the need to pacify political hotspots had now taken priority over ambitious post-independence visions for socio-spatial transformation. This opened up unlikely opportunities for the fripe traders to gradually reposition themselves through "pragmatic deal-making" and "provisional agreements" (Simone 2014: 38), from illegitimate encroachers to stakeholders of urban renewal: first, the flourishing fripe trade began to use commercial infrastructures and land that the municipality struggled to capitalise on. Second, the money from the fripe provided the necessary private investment to co-finance profitable real estate development, allowing traders who had successfully joined the ranks of wholesalers or had established control over weekly *souks* to finance and shape the outcomes of the renewal operations.

a. Co-financing rehabilitation and transforming the *Hafsia* into a commercial district

By the time the alternative rehabilitation proposal was finalised by the ASM in 1973, the *Hafsia* had developed into the largest fripe market in the city. The new proposal for rehabilitation, elaborated in collaboration with UNESCO, aimed to preserve the remaining historical fabric of the neighbourhood and was supposedly tailored to local needs as it was based on a broad survey conducted with local residents in 1972. Despite the fripe market's prominent positioning at the heart of the neighbourhood, the fripe traders remained however excluded from the assessment and were seen to stand in the way of project completion. Already from 1968, the municipality had sought to halt the expansion of the fripe market, periodically demolishing market stalls that encroached further on municipally-owned land and organising police raids to expel itinerant traders (Van Groen and Lozer 1976: 14).

Negotiating relocation, maintaining presence: a collective double strategy

To free up space for renewal, the municipality launched a more comprehensive relocation project for the *Hafsia* fripe market in 1970. The goal was to move all traders to *Mellassine*, a working-class area to the West of the Tunis *medina* that already featured a large *marché aux puces*. Instead of entering into negotiations with the traders, Hamadi and Najib recount that the "*baladiya"* (municipality) simply began to dismantle the market stalls that were to make way for the main neighbourhood street and a new commercial infrastructure. With demolitions already in progress, the municipality offered the traders new boutique spaces in the *Mellassine* market as compensation. Faced with the collective indignation of the *Hafsia* traders, the municipality further agreed to attribute an empty patch of land to itinerant fripe traders displaced from the *Hafsia,* and promised to develop a new, covered fripe marketplace in *Mellassine* with 130 boutiques (Van Groen and Lozer 1976: 25). Confronted with the threat of relocation, the fripe traders adopted a double strategy: while signalling their willingness to enter into negotiations with the municipality and agreeing to partially relocate to *Mellassine*, they

simultaneously retained what Hamadi and Najib refer to as "the inner part of the fripe market" adjacent to *Souk El Grana.*

The stall owner for whom Najib worked was one of those leading the negotiations. While he set up a new shop in *Mellassine*, he asked Najib to run business on his stall in the *Hafisa* for a profit share. Fearing a drop in revenues as *Mellassine* lacked the centrality and reputation of the *Hafsia,* he preferred to hold onto his original trading space and to await an opportunity to return to the *Hafsia.* As Hamadi recounts: "We inside (the inner market) weren't directly affected by the first demolitions and we had built proper *"boutikat"* (boutiques). We were almost 200 people working in the market at the time, most of us had *"batendas"* (licenses) and *"bons"* (purchasing vouchers) and we were paying taxes so the municipality couldn't simply tell us to leave". As the fripe traders rightly calculated that the authorities' priority was to clear the land destined for immediate redevelopment and that the municipality wouldn't try to forcibly remove the inner market, they cooperated and agreed to a partial relocation to *Mellassine.* Meanwhile, the traders retained the core of their market and thus their presence and future leverage over the area's development.

Returning to the Hafsia as private stakeholders

While the first phase of the ASM's rehabilitation project foresaw the reconstruction of the demolished *Souk El-Hout*, and thus the creation of a covered commercial infrastructure with about 100 shop spaces (Abdelkafi 1986: 562), no plans were initially made to accommodate the fripe traders. The development of new commercial spaces and offices along the *Hafsia's* main road were equally destined for "new economic activities" (ibid) and thus explicitly ostracised the fripe as backward and marginal trade. However, when the first phase of rehabilitation was coming to an end in the late 1970s, the municipality faced unanticipated difficulties in selling the new commercial and office spaces in the *Hafsia.* Little thought had in fact been given to what kind of "new economic activities" would be willing to move to the dense and still ill-reputed inner-city area. As the rehabilitation of 600 housing units and the provision of subsidised social housing and infrastructure relied on the profitable sale of commercial spaces and private housing carrying a surcharge for the overall project, the failure to sell the newly developed commercial spaces threatened to stall the entire project.

Faced with this bleak prospect, the municipality altered its initial strategy. It remains disputed who started negotiations with the fripe traders, as some place responsibility with the municipality and others say the local party cell of the *Neo-Destour,* referred to as "the real administrators of the project at the time*"* initiated the negotiations [88]. What is certain is that the new market-building project in *Mellassine* was shelved and over 80 fripe traders instead returned to the *Hafsia* and moved into the new, covered commercial infrastructure. While neither Hamadi nor Najib were able to buy shop spaces in the new infrastructure, they benefitted indirectly from the new role of the fripe trade in the second phase of renewal. Most importantly, the transformation of the new commercial infrastructure into a fripe trading centre put an end to the municipality's relocation plans and affirmed the *Hafsia's* status as an undisputed retail centre for the fripe in Tunis. Generating a new sense of security and legitimacy, this provoked a process of transferring ownership of market stalls between the fripe traders, despite the factual absence of any formal "*milkiya"* (ownership titles). Najib and other former shop assistants with limited resources were now able to buy the "*batenda"* (license) of stall spaces vacated by those who moved to the better-positioned "*souk al-jdid"* (new market) adjacent to the newly constructed main road of the

[88] Appendix I, Interview 31 and 33;

Hafsia. For Najib, who had arrived in the capital city less than a decade before with nothing but the clothes he wore, the purchase of his own trading space reasserted his legitimate presence in the *Hafsia.*

The fripe wholesalers and the co-production of a contingent success story

Despite the agreement with the fripe traders, the first phase of urban renewal in the *Hafsia* ended in overall financial loss. As a result, the second phase of the project aimed primarily at filling the remaining gaps and vacant plots in the neighbourhood (Abdelkafi 1986: 581) with a view to increasing the attractiveness of the neighbourhood in order to raise property values. Initiated in 1985, the second phase was no longer executed by the public housing agency SNIT, but was handed over to the newly created governmental agency *Agence de Réhabilitation et Rénovation Urbaine* (ARRU), and was backed by a loan from the World Bank, which had begun to finance urban rehabilitation on a large scale in Tunisia during the 1980s (Miossec 1999: 105). In the assessment for the second renewal phase, "vacant areas occupied by ambulatory vendors" were seen to be "spreading deterioration" and were thus identified as damaging to local property values (Unit of Housing and Governance et al. 1999: 3). The planning of modern commercial infrastructures that could replace anarchic trading landscapes thus formed a core objective of the second project phase (Abdelkafi 1986: 585) and the financial viability of the project was to be ensured through the enhanced participation of private investors, who could now buy serviced sites in the *Hafsia* to develop their own residential or commercial projects.

Inadvertently, a substantial part of the private investment for the second phase of renewal came from stakeholders in the fripe economy, especially those who had ascended in the ranks of the wholesale business or were involved in the lucrative import of fripe to Tunisia. By 1976, an estimated 20 wholesalers had acquired storage spaces and offices in the *Hafsia* and were working as unlicensed intermediaries between fripe sorting companies and traders all over the capital city (Van Groen and Lozer 1976: 10). Due to the wholesalers' exclusive access to the sorting factories and considerable leeway over price-setting, their profit margins were significant and rapid expansion translated into growing demand for storage spaces and parking lots in the *Hafsia.* Especially the outer part of the neighbourhood, where the protectorate authorities had created the *Bab Cartagena* – an archway and access road – to facilitate vehicular access to the *medina* (Ferjani 2017: 144), had become the preferential operating ground of the wholesalers. This was also where the second phase of renewal was concentrated. Consequently, the *Hafsia* became a prime investment site for the large sums of cash earned by importers and wholesalers during the 1980s and 1990s, with stakeholders from the fripe buying both developed real estate and acting as private developers, purchasing empty plots and building their own commercial infrastructures[89].

It was thus the role of the *Hafsia* as fripe wholesale and retail centre that drove up real estate prices exponentially during the 1980s and 1990s, and proved central to the completion and overall profitability of the renewal project. While this benefitted fripe wholesalers and other private investors, most of the original, low-income inhabitants of the neighbourhood were displaced over the course of renewal operations[90]. While zoning regulations had been designed to guarantee the preservation of a mixed-use environment, many of the housing units or office spaces were gradually readapted for commercial purposes, "not surprisingly", as an architect involved remarks, "because it was essentially the money of the fripe that completed the project"[91]. While numerous residents were thus displaced, fripe traders like Hamadi and Najib in the inner market successfully held on to their initial trading spaces. As Najib

[89] Appendix I, Interview 19;
[90] Appendix I, Interview 33;
[91] Appendix I, Interview 31;

remarks with pride, the "*souk al-qdim"* (old fripe market) thus represented a stable core for a neighbourhood undergoing radical transformations. Pointing to the dusty ground under his stall, Najib remarks: "A lot of things changed around us but we (the fripe traders) stayed (…). I am trading today where I used to sleep 50 years ago*"*. The fripe traders' prominent role in the second phase of renewal thus dramatically altered the project outcome, transforming the *Hafsia* from a predominantly residential area into a dynamic commercial district.

Both the first and the second phase of the *Hafsia* renewal project won a prestigious *Aga Khan Award* for architecture and thus became the most widely known success story of urban renewal in post-independence Tunis. While the jury praised exceptional "community involvement" in both project phases and heralds "the excellent public-private partnership that guaranteed the financial and economic viability and success of the project" (Davidson et al. 1995), it fails to mention the fripe traders' role in the project. In an evaluation of the renewal project, completed between 1994 and 1995, the success of the project is summarised as a "dramatic increase in property values" which guaranteed "a leverage ratio of 3.4 Tunisian Dinar for every 1 Dinar of public investment" (Unit for Housing et al. 1999: 24, 36). While the profitability of the project is credited to the active role of the "private sector" (ibid), the fripe commerce remains again conspicuously absent from the report (Association de Sauvegarde de la Medina 1999). The systematic obfuscation of the fripe trade's role in shaping the outcome – and indeed, in enabling the completion – of renewal in the *Hafsia* is not only evident in project documentation, but is also echoed in contemporary discourses of those who were directly involved in the project[92]. It must be seen as indicative of a desire to uphold differentiations between original planning visions and perverted outcomes, and official stakeholders and illegitimate encroachers, obscuring the diverse modes of co-production and mutually beneficial agreements that blurred such lines.

b. The contested remaking of the *Ibn Khaldoun* estate

In January 1984, the *Cité Ibn Khaldoun* became a hotspot of rioting during the "*émeutes du pain"* (bread riots) that rocked Tunisia. The spectacular moment of rioting represented the culmination of a broader conjuncture of aggravated economic and political crisis in the capital. The state's withdrawal from public housing provision, combined with continued urban growth[93] and a "laissez-faire policy*"* towards informal settlements (Chabbi 1989: 260) had resulted in the expansion of the so-called "*ceinture rouge"* ("red belt"), a ring of informally built-up, consolidated urban settlements that accommodated a staggering 400,000 inhabitants by 1984[94] (Lafi 2017: 51). At the same time, rapidly rising youth unemployment led to mounting frustration and a concentration of poverty in these dense urban areas (Miossec 1999: 99). Eruptions of violence during the 1979 general strike and the consecutive 1984 bread riots demonstrated the political explosiveness of the situation, triggering targeted state operations in what were now referred to as "urban problem territories" (Chabbi 1999: 194). The resumption of state intervention in *Ibn Khaldoun* must be understood in this context, coming as a direct reaction to the area's prominent role in the riots, and intending to reign in a space that seemed to have slipped out of state control.

[92] Appendix I, Interview 30;

[93] From Tunisia's independence in 1956 to 1984, the population of Tunis almost tripled, from 540,000 to 1.4 million (Lafi 2017: 51);

[94] In differentiation from the earlier *gourbivilles,* most settlements that were built-up informally during the 1970s and 1980s offered good quality housing and a move to these areas from the dilapidated inner city signalled social ascension;

In addition to such political motives, the municipality recognised the potential for profitable real estate investment on the large patch of land that had remained undeveloped in the lower part of the *Ibn Khaldoun* estate. As the municipality hoped to develop a new 'commercial centre' in the lower part of the estate, it planned to dismantle and replace the auto-constructed marketplace in the upper part of the estate that had functioned as an informal neighbourhood core. However, the powerful opposition of different trader groups, and first and foremost the fripe traders who had turned the small marketplace into the physical centre of their business in the weekly *souks,* forced the municipality to shelve initial plans. Instead, the municipality gradually entered into agreements with the fripe traders that effectively turned them into key stakeholders in the development of the lower part of the estate: instead of being expelled from the neighbourhood, the fripe traders in fact established a new, expansive marketplace that lastingly reshaped the entire urban area.

Attempts to reassert control and replace the auto-constructed marketplace

The bread riots of 1984 were first sparked as a reaction to cuts in wheat subsidies in the South of the country[95], and then spread to the "*ahyah shaabiya"* (working-class areas) of Tunis on January 3rd 1984 (Seddon 1989: 179). The *Ibn Khaldoun* estate was rapidly enveloped by violent protests and in the night from January 3rd to January 4th, young men in the estate burnt cars of local middle-class households, pillaged the *Magasin Moderne* – the supermarket located in the lower part of the estate – and set fire to the local secondary school (Ben Slimane 1995: 280). Widespread media reporting on the rioting in *Ibn Khaldoun* brought the housing estate back to the centre of public attention, now casting what had been considered a "success story of planning policy for social housing" as a "social failure" and a "*zone urbaine dangereuse"* ("urban danger zone") (ibid). Explicit attacks on symbols of the state reinforced fears of the *Cité* becoming a hub for oppositional politics. The proximity of *Cité Ibn Khaldoun* to both the Tunis Manar University campus, which had become a centre for left-wing student politics, and to the *gourbiville* of *Djebel Lahmar*, which was considered a recruitment ground for Islamists (Vasile 1997: 113), further augmented the sense that intervention was urgent.

The construction of, first, a police station and, a little later, a party office of the unitary party in *Ibn Khaldoun* were thus intended to regain control over the estate (Ben Medien 2004). Both were erected in utmost proximity to the auto-constructed marketplace, which had expanded into adjacent residential areas through the transformation of garages and ground floors into shop spaces, and was thus considered emblematic for the generalised "breakdown of order" in the neighbourhood (Ben Slimane 1995: 277). Police interventions then began to target the market and its urban surrounds, and young market traders became subject to stop and search actions. Particularly young men like Slim, who were coming from *Djebel Lahmar* on a day-to-day basis, faced constant police harassment: "The police sometimes waited for us on the way, they would just stop us from going to work*",* Slim remembers, "or they just suddenly stormed the market, picked up young men and drove us to the detention centre to beat us up*".* What the security forces described as anti-Islamist security operations in fact often resembled "indiscriminate raids" that resulted in "arrests of young men from ordinary spaces like bus stops or cafes in the *Ibn Khaldoun* neighbourhood" (ibid: 280).

Tensions between the security forces and market traders were thus already running high when the municipality decided to construct a new neighbourhood centre in the yet undeveloped lower part of the *Ibn Khaldoun* housing estate. The planned expansion of the "*metro léger"* (light rail system) to the

[95] Under pressure of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the government had announced plans to cut wheat subsidies in December 1983;

lower part of *Cité Ibn Khaldoun* gave new impetus for the development plans, as the municipality hoped to transform the vast empty space into a booming commercial hub that could cater to the rapidly growing upper middle-class areas of Northern Tunis. The goal was thus two-fold: firstly, to replace the sprawling and anarchic *souk* in the upper part of the neighbourhood with a covered municipal "*marché"* (market) in the lower part of the estate and to thus re-establish control over the neighbourhood centre. Secondly, to commercially exploit a still undervalued municipal land resource that was strategically located adjacent to a future transport hub.

When the new market infrastructure was completed in 1988, the municipality began negotiations with fruit and vegetable traders and butchers to relocate to the lower part of the housing estate. As was the case with other planned, municipal markets, the new infrastructure was reserved for fresh food products and thus excluded the fripe traders. While the municipality offered tax reductions to incentivise the move to the new market, the food traders feared to be cut off from the flourishing upper market and their local clientele and thus refused to relocate to what in fact resembled an isolated infrastructure between yet unfinished tram tracks and empty patches of undeveloped land. Faced with the reluctance of fresh food traders to relocate, the municipality decided to dismantle the auto-constructed marketplace in the upper part of the estate. Adel says he will never forget the day when police forces, accompanied by municipal workers, stormed the marketplace and began to demolish market stalls, without prior warning. "Everything escalated really fast*",* he recounts, "everyone came to protect their own stall and we called friends*, "wouled l-houma"* (lit. "boys from the area", here meaning those still residing in *Djebel Lahmar*) that came to help. (…) The police arrested some traders and then things went really violent. It (the clashes) continued during the whole night, and some of us tried to burn the police station*.*" After a day and night of violent clashes and subsequent rioting, the market emerged largely intact, but several youths and policemen had been injured.

The Wulad Ayar as powerful stakeholders in the transformation of Ibn Khaldoun

Taken aback by the fripe traders' collective defence of the market and their clout over the upper part of the estate, the municipality quickly scrapped plans to demolish the auto-constructed marketplace. Slim says that it took the violent response of the traders for the municipality to realise that "we fripe traders actually controlled a big part of the market (…) and we were running our *"bizness" (*business*)* from the neighbourhood*".* The tight-knit social bonds and organisation of the fripe traders that had been key to consolidating the marketplace and to expanding control over weekly *souks* now proved essential for entering into negotiations with the municipality. As Adel explains, "the *baladiya* (municipality) realised they needed to speak to *"fripiers"* (fripe traders) like my father who could then talk to the others and convince them to cooperate*."* Eventually, the deal concluded between the municipality and the traders was mutually beneficial: the fripe traders, who had been struggling with limited trading space and difficult vehicular access in the upper part of *Ibn Khaldoun* were offered a lease of land from the municipality in the lower part of the estate. This allowed them to relocate a part of their trading activities to the empty grounds adjacent to the newly constructed municipal market and the soon-to-be-completed tram station. In return, they would register for annual municipal "*batendas"* (licenses) and pay rent to the municipality.

Within a short time span, the power hierarchies from the upper market were thus transferred to the much larger and formally authorised marketplace in the newly emerging centre of *Ibn Khaldoun,* providing the fripe traders with a strategic position right at the core of the municipality's new development project. Those belonging to influential trader families, like Adel and Slim, benefitted disproportionately from the deal, as they received several *batendas* and ample trading space in the new market, and thus

ascended in the ranks of the fripe retail business. Slim and Adel, who had toured weekly *souks* around the capital city before, now received their own, permanent trading spaces and were able to employ others to drive their van and carry out the physically exhausting work in the *souks* of Tunis on their behalf. At the same time, other fripe and fresh food traders kept their stalls in the auto-constructed market of the upper estate, and the municipality never attempted to dismantle it again.

The relocation of the fripe market to the lower part of *Ibn Khaldoun* proved to be an immediate success and the market rapidly expanded beyond the originally attributed, gravelled field, enveloping the municipal market, the spaces along both sides of the tram tracks, as well as the surrounding neighbourhood streets. Several factors explain this success: first, the relocation coincided with the opening of the new tram station, and the commercial development of the lower part of the estate, turning it into an attractive shopping destination both for lower social classes from *Djebel Lahmar* and the inner city, and for car-owning middle-class inhabitants of the residential areas to the North of *Ibn Khaldoun.* Second, the increase in fripe imports to Tunisia and the professionalisation of fripe sorting during the 1990s transformed the fripe into a mainstream consumer good. Particularly the availability of a new category of "*crème"* (luxury) used garments now increasingly attracted a middle-class clientele to the fripe and provided an opportunity for the traders to specialise in high-end merchandise. As Slim explains, "the clients in the new market were completely different from the old market up in the *houma* (local neighbourhood). We specialised in original brands and increased the prices in the lower market, and then resold the leftovers in the upper market, to our local clients*."*

Less than a decade after the bread riots in 1984, fripe trading had thus transformed *Cité Ibn Khaldoun* in ways wholly unanticipated in original planning visions or municipal redevelopment plans. The juxtaposed market landscapes in the upper and lower part of the estate now turned the neighbourhood into the second largest fripe trading centre of Tunis, secondary only to the *Hafsia*. As a young woman who grew up in *Ibn Khaldoun* during the 1990s explains, "the fripe colonised the entire area (…) and for us, as teenagers in *Ibn Khaldoun,* the fripe market was the only place to go to in the neighbourhood, it was both our evening outing and weekend outing*"*[96]. For the municipality, meanwhile, the flourishing fripe market not only translated into a substantial increase in tax revenues, it also contributed to the rapid appreciation of yet undeveloped municipal land in the lower part of the estate. By the early 2000s, the plots adjacent to the municipal marketplace had become highly attractive for private commercial development and the municipality entered into negotiations with a developer who aimed to construct a new supermarket. However, the general appreciation of both residential and commercial real estate in *Ibn Khaldoun* – to which the fripe traders had undoubtedly contributed – once again turned the sprawling fripe marketplace into a point of contention. As the municipality attempted to develop more and more parcels of land that the fripe traders had occupied, police clearances and conflicts between the traders and the municipality erupted and especially since the 2000s, the burgeoning fripe market is once again perceived as a nuisance by the authorities.

Envisioned by planners as a self-sufficient neighbourhood that would generate "social harmony and equilibrium" amongst diverse social classes, *Ibn Khaldoun* in fact always remained a majority middle-class residential area whose car-owning inhabitants intentionally minimised interactions within the neighbourhood (Ben Slimane 1995: 269, 276). For working-class families meanwhile, who were resettled to the estate from *Djebel Lahmar*, the incomplete housing project represented an alien urban environment and only the auto-construction of the marketplace and its embedding in city-wide fripe trading networks allowed them to gradually appropriate and transform the estate. In the process,

[96] Appendix I, Interview 34;

stigmatised rural migrants and their descendants from *Djebel Lahmar* lastingly positioned themselves as a central constituency in the urban fripe trade, building upon – at times imaginary – shared lineages as *Wulad Ayar*. This positioning then qualified them as key stakeholders in the remaking of the lower part of the housing estate, transforming what was considered a "failed estate" in 1984 (ibid: 280) into an economic success story. Inadvertently, the fripe market therefore produced a version of the social complexity that the estate's planners had desired. Until today, few marketplaces in contemporary Tunis attract a clientele as socially diverse as that of the *Ibn Khaldoun* market, breaking up the "*entre-soi"* of urban elites in the residential North of the capital (Ben Othman 2009(b): 89) and testifying to the fripe as a hybrid shopping practice that transgresses habitual social boundaries (Miossec 1990: 239).

5. Conclusion

"*Ayari, Ayari*", echoes through the fripe markets of Tunis several times a day. On handcarts, vendors sell the popular "*casse-croûte Ayari"* (Ayari sandwich), consisting of egg and harissa spread out on round flat breads and known for being filling and unbeatably cheap. Inseparably linked to the fripe markets, the "*Ayari"* sandwich testifies to a history of migration and poverty as it derives its denomination from a tribal identity that gained new signification in the urban fripe trade. It also stands for the capacity of particular migrant constituencies to carve out space for themselves in a specific economy and in the city, and to confer new meaning to identities shaped by both rural pasts and urban presents. While denominations like "*Ayari"* have entered current language and have become closely intertwined with the fripe trade, the central role of different generations of migrant traders in shaping the contemporary socio-spatial order of Tunis remains largely unacknowledged or continues to be dismissed as a mere act of encroachment[97].

The counter-histories constructed in this chapter show how two prominent urban renewal projects in post-independence Tunis – originally designed to break up pockets of rurality in the city – inadvertently opened possibilities of space-making to different migrant constituencies who built urban livelihoods in the fripe trade. The goal of presenting these counter-histories is not merely to "confer recognition" to "spaces of poverty and forms of popular agency that often remain invisible or neglected" (Roy 2011: 224). Rather, the aim is to challenge dominant epistemologies of 'the urban' in contemporary Tunis by deconstructing the performative binaries that have long underpinned accounts of urban development in the post-independence city. First, this chapter destabilises the normative distinctions between 'rural' and 'urban' that continue to reverberate in present-day systems of differentiation that exclude the fripe and its constituencies from 'the urban order'. Instead, these counter-histories show how 'the rural' was itself transformed in the city and became in turn a structuring element to the social and spatial order of Tunis. Second, the deliberate rewriting of the history of two renewal projects highlights the blurry distinctions between 'planned' and 'unplanned' urban space as it brings into view the – often unlikely or unpredictable – alliances and diverse modes of co-production through which 'urban projects' actually come to life in the city.

Finally, a focus on a particular commerce for investigating processes of city-making allows these counter-histories to posit a mundane realm of the urban economy as a productive starting point for investigating processes of urban transformation. By centring on the auto-construction and consolidation of marketplaces, this chapter challenges dominant portrayals of the urban fripe trade in Tunis as

[97] Appendix I, Interview 30;

ahistorical and devoid of structure. It thus problematises contemporary discourses that frame *fripisation* as an ephemeral process and cast the specific market forms of the fripe trade as unplanned or unordered. Anchoring the fripe trade in specific socio-spatial histories that are entwined with broader narratives of urban transformation is therefore essential to comprehending contemporary processes of market-making in Tunis and the ways in which these are variably included in or excluded from what can be recognised as 'the urban order'.

Part Two: Introduction

Figure 5 Itinerant fripe traders at a weekly *souk* in *Ezzahra*, a Southern Tunis suburb (2018)

Part Two: Introduction

Collective enactments of valuation work: researching a singular urban economy

The two fripe marketplaces discussed in the preceding chapter – the *Hafsia* and *Ibn Khaldoun* – continued to represent central sites of fripe retailing in the capital when I began field research in June 2017. However, they had lost their long-standing monopoly position. Innumerable specialised fripe trading spaces were now in competition against one another, and rapid processes of market proliferation were unfolding across the city: fripe trading was enveloping unbuilt patches of land on the urban peripheries, transforming inner-city streets into dense market landscapes, and taking over former vegetable markets, grocery shops and workshops. I thus encountered the fripe trade as a prominent factor of urban change, captured in the vernacular word creation *fripisation*.

The second part of this thesis sets out from *fripisation* and the explicit link the term establishes between economic processes and urban change, or market- and space-making. The three chapters comprising the second part specifically address the third question set out at the beginning of this thesis, investigating how contemporary processes of market-making with diverse fripe circulations co-constitute urban space. In doing so, they also provide answers to the first two questions, regarding the fripe's contingent remaking as a specific commodity form in Tunis and the economy's contested positioning in the present-day city. In differentiation from Part One, which built an account of the fripe as a historically constituted urban economy, Part Two focuses on an ethnographic understanding of contemporary micro-level processes of market-making: valuation, circulation and exchange. Motivating this empirical focus on economic practices is an interest in how the fripe economy operates in and through space, and thus is an agent of urban change. The subsequent sections discuss the methodological choices and research process underpinning this account, setting out from the following questions: first, how does the fripe as an unstable commodity provide an entry point for researching cycles of valuation, circulation and exchange in Tunis? Second, how does an emphasis on the diverse actors involved in these processes enable an understanding of market-making as collectively enacted and constitutive to urban space?

1. Fripe valuation as a basis for market-making

During initial market observations, "picturing practices" that focused on fripe displays and market arrangements proved central for developing "techniques of seeing" (Crang 1997: 366) the fripe as a heterogeneous material basis for the economy. In addition to sharpening the focus through the camera lens on inert fripe materials within hectic and bustling market landscapes, the photographs themselves captured eclectic collections of 'stuff', from Christmas decorations dangling next to carnival costumes and worn-out diving equipment, to Donald Trump T-shirts advertised next to a jumper printed for the voluntary fire brigade of a German village in the Black Forest. Both the practice of taking photographs and the resulting images highlighted the heterogeneous material assemblages of the fripe that pose a "problem of unordered diversity" (Miller 1998(a): 6) in Tunis marketplaces. Normally, commodities are transformed through legally binding product standards into equal units at their production, ensuring the stabilisation of their exchange value (Çaliskan and Callon 2010: 6; Østbø Haugen 2018(a): 1297). In the absence of a centralised locus of production however, and due to the fripe's origin stories of disposal, donation or destocking in Europe and North America, it is impossible to convert the garments and objects "into transactable commodities by rendering their qualities stable and known" (Berndt and Boeckler 2009). Rather, diverse material and immaterial "inscriptions" (Appelgren and Bohlin

2015(a):160) on the fripe materials testify to their heterogeneous "economic and social biographies" (Kopytoff, 1986, 67). The uncertain quality and value of the fripe materials disclosed in the Tunis marketplaces underlines the contingencies inherent in requalifying garments and objects for their "commodity situation", an always context-specific social relation (Appadurai 1986: 13, 19). Garbage containers overflowing with second-hand shoes at the end of market days, or women sifting through unwearable textile materials disposed of in large piles on the market peripheries, testified to the often-blurry lines between discard and commodity form in the Tunis fripe markets.

The fripe's uncertain commodity status therefore shifted attention to the continuous efforts involved in requalifying – or *valuing* – it for circulation and market exchange in Tunis. "Value" has been theorised as the "starting point for all economic analysis", as it "focuses attention both on what economic activity is about and on how it is practiced" (Lee 2006: 417). Here, contingent attempts at requalification of the fripe foregrounded a conception of value not as a stable and intrinsic quality, but as a variable category that is constituted in process (Hutter and Stark 2015). Since Thompson's reflections on "rubbish" as "malleable category" (1979: 88), analytical attention to *valuation* as a non-linear and contingent process has characterised scholarly work on waste, reuse or second-hand economies in diverse contexts (Corwin 2018; Brooks 2015; Gregson et al. 2010; Herod et al. 2014; Lepawsky and Mather 2011; Norris 2010; Rosenfeld 2018). Study of transnational waste economies in particular has highlighted the social and cultural situatedness and thus fluidity of value categories over space and time, allowing "things" to "move into and out of the commodity phase" (Gregson et al. 2010: 848) in different contexts. As the fripe materials travel from diverse locations of donation or disposal to the Tunisian sorting factories and, subsequently, retail spaces, they are exposed to different "cultural processes of value definition and performance" (Guyer 2004: 21). Seemingly mundane, micro-level practices of fripe valuation are thus bound up with intricate and contingent translation attempts that turn the Tunis fripe marketplaces into sites for researching "the unexpected and unstable aspects of global interaction" (Tsing 2011: 3).

Empirically then, valuation draws attention to "the study of what people do with objects" (Miller 1998(a): 19), or the concrete material practices that enact translations in fripe materials allowing them to re-circulate as commodities. Analysing the distinct "world of practice" (ibid) underpinning fripe valuation is thus a starting point for comprehending market-making, or the enactment of the fripe as urban economy, in Tunis. In certain reuse or waste economies, valuation can be observed through physical processes of coming-apart (Gregson et al. 2010: 853) or re-assemblage and repair (Corwin 2018: 22), and thus the mutability of materials in circulation. Elsewhere, as is the case in the fripe economy, valuation occurs "without industrial labour through a process of translation" (Tsing, 2013: 23, 30). While the physical transformation of garments through processing is an important element of value creation in the global second-hand clothes economy – for instance documented in the shoddy blanket industry for the humanitarian aid sector (Norris 2010, 2012) – "reuse is often more lucrative than recycling" (Corwin 2018: 22).

In Tunisia, processing of textile materials plays a subordinate role in the valuation of the fripe, despite the legal obligation of sorting factories to reprocess at least 20% of all garment imports[98]. Consequently, most garments and objects imported as fripe remain largely intact, or even physically unchanged, in their trajectories from the shipping container to the marketplace in Tunis. In order to comprehend the often-invisible transformations that requalify the fripe as "commodity form" (Tsing 2013:23), a close-up engagement with people's micro-level practices with diverse fripe materials – including sorting and

[98] Decree n°2005-2038, amending decree n°95-916; 95-2396 of 2 December 1995; While some factories operate fibre processing machines, producing white industry cloth or insulation materials for European car manufacturers, the percentage of processing remains far beneath the legally binding 20%;

repackaging, warehousing, display and sale, transport, or washing and resale – thus became indispensable. While many of these valuation processes can be found in other second-hand economies (Ayimpam 2016; Hansen 2000(a); Valenciano-Mane 2018), their enactment is also always specific. The 'fripe' is thus historically and culturally constituted as a distinct commodity form in Tunis; at the same time it remains a commodity in-process, remade in specific urban situations that enact its contingent valuation.

2. Researching *'valuation work'* through talk with expert market-makers

Given such importance of valuation to market-making with fripe materials, this research employs the term *valuation work* to capture the ethnographic focus on the diverse agencies involved in contingently requalifying the fripe for commodity circulation and exchange. Valuation work here becomes a starting point for examining "how people enact economies" (Gibson-Graham 2014: 149) and thus for ethnographically uncovering "the actual practice of economy" (Miller 2002: 224). The term '*work*' intentionally leaves open "what counts as work" (Massey 2013: 10), allowing consideration of diverse practices – at times embodied and material, at others more indirect forms of enacting translations in things – that unsettle clear-cut differentiations between formal and informal work, production and consumption, or income-generation and forms of care work or private provisioning. Consequently, investigating valuation work requires engaging with diverse actors, loci and processes of value production, and opens the "multiple social relations and conceptions of value" that constitute "the economic" at any given point in time (Lee 2006: 414). Researching valuation work as a basis for market-making in the fripe economy thus constitutes "a performative act" that "widens the field of economic realities" that can come under consideration (Gibson-Graham 2014: 149, 151).

Empirically, scrutinising valuation work in the fripe rapidly highlighted the "limits of observation" – both directly and through the camera lens – in trying to grasp intricate economic practice (Keshavarzian 2007:35). Over the first six months of research, most of my market observations comprised "a phenomenology of economic practice" (Roitman 2007: 158), recording the unfiltered experiences, atmospheres, embodied performances and gestures, scents and melodies of valuation work in writing, photographs, and sound recordings. While these ethnographic practices were crucial to rendering the "irreducibility of experience" of the fripe markets (Anjaria and Anjaria 2020: 239), such observations proved insufficient for comprehending the logics and meanings underlying people's valuation work. However, as those warning me against the fripe's status as a 'black box' or a 'closed world' had predicted, performing a shift from a largely incognito observer to an interlocutor in the fripe marketplaces proved difficult and time-consuming. The biggest hurdle was mistrust, as the explanation of my research undertaking and introduction as PhD student[99] at times qualified me as "*sahafa"* (journalist) or, worse, "*jasusa"* (spy) in the eyes of fripe traders. Negative press coverage of the fripe – and especially the search for scandals that often motivated journalists to come to the marketplaces – had resulted in a hostile attitude towards anyone asking questions, let alone trying to record interviews or take photographs. In addition, the systematic criminalisation of research under the Ben Ali regime until 2011 (Ben Amor 2013; Bendana 2017) rendered the very idea of 'research' suspect and potentially threatening. As my questions grew more informed and precise over time, a new suspicion crept in, namely that I was practising 'commercial espionage' and wanted to launch a German-Tunisian import-export business.

[99] I handed short, written explanations of my research project (in Arabic and French) and my Durham card with my Tunis phone number to all the people with whom I spoke;

Such suspicion and at times outright hostility greatly complicated field research, and forced me to accept a definition of "ethnography" as "improvisational practice" (Cerwonka and Malkki 2007: 164) that embraces methodological openness and flexibility. Instead of a pre-determined or contained 'field site', I thus began to do research in different fripe markets simultaneously, engaging in a sort of "patchwork ethnography" (Günel et al. 2020) that seized opportunities wherever these arose. While the fripe is commonly referred to as "*alam rijal"* (men's world) and fripe marketplaces remain directed by the bodily performances of male traders and often hyper-masculine codes of behaviour that are linked to the fripe's social history as trade exercised by male migrants, I rapidly noticed substantial differences from one market to another: in some fripe markets – especially those with a very masculine clientele – it was evident that "the presence of women always has to be explained and accounted for" (Rabo 2005: 21), so that any attempt to dwell or observe translated into unsolicited invitations or sexual harassment. In other markets, I felt more at ease and began to develop careful routines of observation, which became the basis for opening up direct engagements with different market participants. To enter into talk with market traders and customers alike, it was crucial to drop the formalities that typically frame interview encounters, from written consent forms to recording devices or pre-scheduled meetings[100]. Instead, I learnt to integrate research conversations into market routines, recognising how regular, seemingly mundane interactions that focused narrowly on people's concrete valuation work could build trust and normalise my presence over time.

The persistent return to the ever-same locations and interlocutors became the single most important factor in gradually establishing myself as a trusted counterpart. Inadvertently, the time-consuming process of moving three times within central Tunis – each time into proximity of another fripe market – helped "erase pre-given boundaries between professional and personal life" (Günel et al. 2020). Chance encounters with fripe wholesalers through negotiations over bike storage, routinised conversations with fripe traders during daily commutes or grocery shopping, or the introduction of my family members in the markets, opened unexpected doors and became the basis for establishing personal rapport. Most importantly, my consistent return over time eventually convinced market traders that I was indeed a 'researcher' and gradually normalised the idea of the fripe as an object of scientific research. Najib, the *Hafsia* trader whose life story is discussed at length in Chapter II was one of the first traders to jokingly refer to me as "*ustaza"* (teacher/professor) and to ask inquisitively about the space his character was going to take in my "book on the fripe", as he liked to refer to it[101]. Other interlocutors similarly developed a greater interest in my research findings over time, so that my initial one-sided questioning soon gave way to two-way conversations during which my interlocutors often challenged my limited understanding, helped re-orient my questions, or pointed out gaps in my narrative. I also shared some of my material with interlocutors, especially photographs and copies of archival material on the history of the fripe trade or specific marketplaces. To mitigate the illegibility of my main research output – first and foremost, written text in English – I also collaborated with the traders of the *Hafsia* fripe market in a participatory research and artistic project with children and youth from the local area[102], and involved three interlocutors in an exhibition that combined photography, sound and reuse objects to render visible some of the valuation processes in the fripe[103].

[100] While formally scheduled interviews (see Appendix I) were recorded and written consent was given, I used verbal consent for ethnographic encounters and most of my conversations remain unrecorded, apart from life history interviews (see Appendix II);

[101] In such conversations, I highlighted the principles of confidentiality to explain why names will be changed and no photographs of interlocutors will be used;

[102] The *Hafsia* project in November and December 2019 was supported by the *Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen* (ifa) and implemented in collaboration with *El-Warcha/Collectif Créatif*;

[103] The photo exhibition and art installation "*Tbarbich"* was supported by the *Institut de Recherche sur le Maghreb Contemporain* (IRMC) and organized at the *Maison de l'Image* in December 2020;

Encountering diverse market participants as 'experts', thus "dislocating the ethnographer as subject of knowing" (Cerwonka and Malkki 2007: 2011), formed the basis for my research interactions in the fripe markets from the beginning. Centring on people's rehearsed practices with fripe materials – from sorting or probing as customers, to display or sale strategies as vendors, to the collection of repair items as resellers – helped mitigate the multiple axes of social difference (Nagar and Geiger 2007: 268) that could have otherwise complicated in-depth conversations. A precondition to speaking with my interlocutors as market-makers was qualifying for 'expert talk' in the fripe, and thus learning to ask meaningful – and yet open – questions that would enable my counterparts to provide at-length explanations and expert advice. Navigating diverse forms of market knowledge with attention to seemingly mundane detail (Geertz 1973), and accepting diverging narratives, explanations and forms of meaning-making as co-constitutive to the economy proved central to comprehending the significance of diverse forms of valuation work. Especially heightened attention to the "vocabularies of practice" (Bhan 2019: 15) my counterparts used to describe their valuation work helped uncover not only the specificity of economic practices, but also their situated meaning. This research thus remained deliberately with "moments of untranslatability" as something generative (Jazeel 2019: 15), engaging with "*lughet al-fripe/al-aswak"* (the language of the fripe/market) – as the inside parlance of the fripe is often referred to – as both possessing an ontological status in shaping processes of revaluation, and as a crucial epistemological tool. The refusal to translate certain key terms was indeed central to opening up the complexity of valuation work: for instance, an individual term like "*al-farz"* describes practices that reach from wage labour in the factory to informal resale activities in the marketplace, and moreover becomes the linguistic root for a descriptor of a distinctly female professional identity in the fripe economy.

In-depth talk with diverse market-makers in the fripe economy, and explicit attention to their language and ways of describing economic practices, was therefore crucial to grasping the multi-layered meanings of valuation work. Importantly, such engagements countered framings of work in the fripe economy as mere subsistence strategies (Brooks 2012) that people engage in largely for a lack of choice (Gruntz 2019). Instead, market-makers' accounts opened up an understanding of the different present and future aspirations, situated forms of knowledge and expertise, and forms of sociability bound up with valuation work. Similar to Millar's account of 'waste work' as intimately connected to many people's "forms of living" – rather than as a mere income source (2018: 9) – valuation work in the fripe thus carries differentiated meaning for different market-makers, and is often reflective of hierarchies of work, social status and professional identities in different sites of valuation work. Ethnographic engagement with the ways in which people "render meaningful their conditions of existence" (Gidwani 2008: 161) and link these to the fripe and particular forms of valuation thus lay at the heart of this research.

3. Expanding 'the field': distributed agencies of valuation work

The closer I engaged with people's valuation practices, the more evident it became that valuation work could not be understood as contained in 'the marketplace', or indeed in any other bounded location. Rather, observation and talk with market-makers highlighted the crucial importance of multiple circulations beyond the physical marketplace – of fripe merchandise, but also of cash, credit obligations, people or information – as the basis for people's situated performances of valuation. Diverse material and immaterial circulations thus connected fripe shopkeepers, stall owners and *nassaba* (street vendors) in the marketplaces to multiple other processes, actors and sites of value production. Consequently, the ethnographic focus on valuation work resulted in a gradual expansion of 'the field', both geographically

and relationally: first, while this ethnographic research had been multi-sited from the outset, I now expanded its scope from diverse fripe trading spaces to sorting factories, wholesale warehouses and innumerable sites of semi-private resale or fripe consumption. Second, while I maintained the in-depth engagement with fripe traders over the course of the research, I now extended my talk and observations to female factory workers, importers, wholesalers, transporters and informal resellers. Rather than proceeding with this geographical and relational expansion in any systematic manner, I allowed diverse "contingent openings" (Tsing 2011: 267) – from chance encounters with transporters or fripe customers in marketplaces to contacts I received through the networks I had established with traders – to determine the gradually evolving contours of my field.

Although interested in the fripe's enactment as 'urban economy', I abstained from pre-determining any fixed geographical 'limits' for my field research. Accepting urban space as a "product of interrelations (…) that is always in the process of being made" (Massey 2005: 9), the administratively defined boundaries of 'Greater Tunis' – or any other fixed and delimited notion of 'the city' or 'the urban' – never defined the scope of the field. Indeed, visits to sorting factories in other Tunisian cities like Bizerte and Sfax, repeated trips to the Tunisian South to meet with influential wholesalers, as well as research on the Tunisian-Algerian fripe trade in the border town El Kef were central to grasping the fripe's dynamics as 'urban economy' in the capital[104]. While I never intentionally followed transnational fripe circulations to or from Tunis, research on the import-export business selectively extended my research to wholesale centres in Cairo, as well as a commercial collection company and vintage shop chain in Paris[105] that entertains intimate connections to particular sites of fripe valuation in Tunis. In addition to keeping the geographical scope of this inquiry open and flexible throughout the research process, an expansion of the field through individual encounters and snowballing contacts allowed me to bring into view typically overlooked locations for value production. Beyond the sorting factories, the Tunis wholesale quarter and diverse fripe marketplaces, particularly the engagement with female sorting workers, resellers and fripe customers shed light on largely invisible sites of valuation work, from private living rooms to exclusive fripe boutiques or women-owned tailor shops and beauty salons on the peri-urban fringes.

Such new loci of valuation work also automatically brought into view a wider set of market-makers and thus a more diverse array of valuation practices. First, these diverse locations for valuation work shed light on the crucial and myriad forms of distinctly female valuation work performed in the fripe economy, despite its perception as male-dominated. In most Arab cities, the majority of economic actors operating in public space, such as the "market trader" (Rabo 2005: 73) or the "workshop master" (Elyachar 2005: 118) remain emblematic masculine figures. The same holds for the fripe economy, where visible work in the wholesale and retail business – and particularly open-air sales practices – are almost exclusively performed by men. Women's valuation work meanwhile remains largely invisible because it is contained in factories or discrete interior resale spaces, or remains unrecognised as 'economic activity'[106] because it is bracketed as "reproductive work and care work" (Gago 2017: 89). In this research however, the open definition of 'work' could account for diverse forms of female valuation work, such as the informal sorting and resale activities of predominantly female, self-employed "*farazet"* (sorters) in the marketplaces, or the tedious consumption work performed by a majority-female clientele in the Tunis fripe markets. Second, exploration of fripe valuation in diverse

[104] Research trip to El Kef, October 20th–23rd 2017; two consecutive research trips to Sfax, 2nd–9th of July and 28th to 30th of October 2018; research in sorting factories on Bizerte, Sfax and Tunis periphery (see Appendix I);
[105] Research in Paris, see Appendix I, Interview 4 and 41; Research in *Al-Wakalah*, Cairo, September 15th–16th 2018;
[106] According to the ILO country estimate for women aged 15+ in 2019, 24% of women participate in the labour market in Tunisia; this estimate obfuscates the disproportionate role of women working informally; accessed May 2nd 2020, available at https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?end=2019&locations=1A-TN-DZ-&start=1990;

urban locations rapidly debunks portrayals of the fripe as an a priori non-state economy. Indeed, observations and talk with both formal and informal market-makers – from factory workers and shopkeepers to unregistered wholesalers and informal street vendors – highlighted the ubiquitous participation of the state in practices of fripe valuation. Approaching the state as an active market-maker revealed the multiple levels and capacities at which it intervenes in the economy: at times, particular entities of the local state assume the role of regulators or law enforcers, and extract formal taxes from those engaged in valuation work; at other times, state employees, officials or members of the customs or security forces participate informally in value extraction, selectively enabling or obstructing fripe circulations.

The 'expanded field' of valuation work thus brought into focus some of the locations, actors and processes involved in enabling, first, the contingent requalification of diverse fripe materials as commodities, and second, their circulation and exchange in contemporary Tunis. By gradually increasing the scope of this research it was possible to highlight additional – and at first invisible – market-making agencies, together with the multiple material and immaterial circulations that create connections and interdependencies between seemingly contained sites and actors of value production. This approach thus extends studies of urban economies that have focused on a single marketplace (Bestor 2004; Keshavarzian 2007; Monteith 2016; Rabo 2005) or have been orientated around a particular worksite, for instance in the study of urban waste economies (Fahmi and Sutton 2010; Millar 2018; Samson 2015). It also shifts empirical focus from individual practices of livelihood-making, often at the heart of ethnographic studies of work in cities of the Global South (Di Nunzio 2019; Mains 2012; Thieme 2013; Weiss 2009), to the collective processes and power structures that determine individual opportunities for participation in market-making.

4. Mobile ethnography: understanding market-making as a relational practice

To go beyond an understanding of valuation work as contained in particular urban locations, it also became crucial to complement situated and immersive research in selected sites of fripe valuation with mobile methods that could allow me to analyse the diverse linkages and dense webs of relationships that underpinned the valuation work of my interlocutors. To comprehend the variegated patterns of movement and interactions involved in people's valuation work, I employed two forms of "mobile ethnography*"* (Büscher and Urry 2009): first, I shadowed the working routines of different interlocutors as they navigated fripe wholesale and retail spaces that serve as hubs or passage points for multi-layered circulations in the contemporary fripe economy. Second, I practised go-alongs with a narrow group of key interlocutors across and beyond the city to comprehend how individual market-makers enhance their opportunities for market participation by inserting themselves into multiple networks, processes and geographies of fripe valuation.

Heightened attention to people's strategies for navigating hubs of fripe wholesale and retail through shadowing practices proved central to revealing the complex patterns of movement and dense webs of relationships that provide the basis for what I had initially perceived as 'individual valuation work'. To gain such insights, it was important to replace largely static observations and conversations – in warehouses, shops or around stalls – with shadowing practices that allowed me to follow different interlocutors over entire working days in particular sites of valuation work. This was premised on knowing interlocutors well, because it required not only their full trust but also their willingness to tolerate my presence for extended periods of time. In locations like the sorting factory and the Tunis wholesale quarter, my opportunities to shadow particular interlocutors remained thus largely limited to

one-off occasions. In different fripe trading places however, and especially, in the *Rue du Liban* fripe market and in a female-owned shop space in *Lafayette,* the repeated shadowing of the same interlocutors over weeks and even months opened up an intricate understanding of working routines. For instance, following highly different market participants as they navigated the *Rue du Liban* fripe market and its urban surroundings (discussed in Chapter IV) proved central to comprehending the marketplace as evolving socio-spatial configuration and crucial basis for collective valuation work.

In addition, the practice of "go-alongs" (Kusenbach 2003: 455) with a narrow circle of key interlocutors turned into a central tool for grasping valuation work as a relational practice that is often premised on movement beyond a bounded 'workplace', instead involving insertion into different networks, and elaborate strategies of navigating urban space and diverse voluntary and involuntary encounters. Over the course of this research, I undertook – at times repeated – go-alongs with a fripe transporter, a sorting factory worker, two wholesalers, diverse fripe traders, employees of the municipal market authority, and two all-female groups of fripe customers[107]. In some cases, this meant following my counterparts from their 'workplace' – such as the factory or marketplace – to diverse other sites of valuation work, for instance informal resale locations on the urban peripheries. In other cases, go-alongs translated into accompanied shopping trips from private homes to different bale openings, or extended truck journeys between factories, warehouses and distribution sites. In the process, the different market-makers I accompanied often crossed boundaries between care and wage work, consumption and production, or roles as market regulators and market participants.

Moving through different spaces alongside my interlocutors allowed for intimate one-on-one conversations that were rarely possible in people's work places, where interruptions were frequent and other people usually joined the conversations. In addition, the go-along holds the "potential to access some of the transcendent and reflexive aspects of lived experience *in situ*" (Kusenbach 2003:455, 456) and the shared navigation of space and confrontation of particular situations often triggered talk about subjects that interlocutors would normally avoid. However, the intimacy produced in go-alongs also proved problematic at times, particularly in the case of car or truck rides with male interlocutors that not only meant putting up with their driving habits but also exposed me to situations of prolonged confinement with no easy exit. Initial, negative experiences thus forced me to limit go-alongs to a relatively narrow circle of trusted interlocutors and female market-makers. While this clearly curtailed my opportunities for engagement – especially in the exclusively male wholesale business – the focus on repeated go-alongs with a narrow group of key interlocutors also presented advantages: as shared commutes, delivery rides or shopping trips only took place after months of observation and talk in people's 'work places', my counterparts felt at ease with sharing working routines that, for instance, required granting access to private spaces, or providing insight into illicit or deceitful practices and thus demanded trust.

Both shadowing practices and go-alongs became crucial tools for gaining an insight into the complex – and at times incommensurable – calculations that underpin different people's valuation work. First, the movement alongside interlocutors highlighted that market-making in the fripe economy implies entering into diverse alliances, "expanding spaces of operation" (Simone 2005: 517) through complex webs of relationships. Countering portrayals of market calculation as disentanglement, alternative vocabularies for calculative agencies – such as "hustling" (Thieme 2017), "knotting" (DeBoeck 2015(b)) or "manoeuvring" (Di Nunzio 2019: 129) – have long highlighted the multi-layered relational processes underpinning economic practices in different African cities. Similarly, in the fripe economy,

[107] See key interlocutors listed in Appendix II;

tending to diverse social relations often constitutes a central, rather than auxiliary, aspect of working routines: for instance, the daily routines of fripe transporters were structured around strategic sociabilities, from the morning coffee in the wholesale quarter where key information circulates, to visits – and favours offered – to policemen stationed in strategic positions, to evening beers in marketplaces where competition was rife. Second, observing people's multi-layered interactions through mobile methods illuminated the "mixture of forms of exchange" (Miller 2002: 222), and thus diverse registers of value production, many market-makers engage in as part of their valuation work. Accordingly, only some of the "marginal gains" (Guyer 2004: 69) achieved through valuation work were quantifiable as material profit. For example, female *farazet* (sorters) who ensured that regular fripe supplies from the factories reached their extended families or neighbourhood acquaintances, often operated on the grounds of intangible forms of relational value, which highlighted the centrality of distinct moral economies in guiding valuation work.

Finally, mobile methods revealed how individual opportunities for valuation work are premised on the continuous negotiation, and successful navigation, of unequal power relations that structure value production and extraction in the fripe economy. Shadowing practices and go-alongs thus shed light on "the making of the market as political process, involving power and subjectivity" (Mukhopadhyay 2014: 206). The shadowing of people's situated working routines elucidated the strict hierarchies determining differentiated opportunities for market participation – and thus fripe valuation – within particular marketplaces, sorting factories, or the Tunis wholesale quarter. Yet following people beyond these confined locations of valuation work simultaneously showed how individual market-makers attempted to circumvent or mitigate such "politics of value" (Warnier 2008:8) by opening up new opportunities for value production. For instance, "*nassaba"* (street vendors), whose market participation often hinged on contestations over limited vending space, improved their positioning by working in groups and extending their radius of operation to multiple supply and resale locations, so that they could flexibly shift from one marketplace to another when conflict erupted with permanent traders or the authorities.

While becoming directly involved in my interlocutors' strategic navigation of a highly competitive and often-contested sphere of value production proved central to grasping the contingencies inherent to fripe circulation, it also resulted in difficult situations. First, go-alongs particularly, meant that I was in situations where bribes were being exchanged or where I turned into a confidant about illicit import or wholesale practices being prepared or executed. I was thus particularly careful to retain my positioning as an observer and to protect the confidentiality of my interlocutors, which included a refusal to speak to local media or publish sensitive material that could have compromised research participants. At the same time, such direct observations proved vital to make sense of the often-complex intersection between "social and cultural un/acceptability" and the "legal/illegal binary" (Gregson and Crang 2017: 209) that unsettles stable definitions of what is considered licit or illicit by different actors and in different spaces of the fripe economy. Second, mobile methods always carried the risk of associating me too closely with particular interlocutors, a danger that was compounded by researching an economy where "everybody knows everything about everybody", as one of the largest fripe wholesalers in Tunisia once put it to me. To avoid losing access to other sites or market-makers, I thus learnt to periodically switch 'field sites' and never to rely on individual gatekeepers in order to maintain a position of neutrality within the field of power of the urban fripe economy.

Mobile methods were therefore essential for understanding how situated practices of valuation work comprise wider economic processes. In urban studies, mobile methods have primarily been used to examine individual strategies of navigating the city, often bound up with questions of livelihood-making

(Langevang and Gough 2009; McFarlane and Silver 2017; Simone 2005). Here, moving alongside diverse market-makers enabled this research to show how individual opportunities for market-making rely on dense webs of connections and "reciprocal exchange relations" (Appadurai 1986: 33), yet also a hierarchical politics of value. It thus foregrounds an understanding of valuation work as always situated, and yet never fully contained, in particular urban locations. Even if market-makers remained relatively immobile during their working routines, their performances of valuation relied on multiple material and immaterial circulations beyond their situated 'work place'. Moments of sudden stoppage rendered particularly visible the interdependencies and unequal power relations structuring value production and extraction in the fripe economy.

5. *'Collective enactments'* of valuation and the production of urban space

My ethnographic engagement with valuation work in the fripe markets was explicitly "geographical" (Hitchings and Latham 2020: 973) from the outset, as it not only situated valuation in particular urban locations, but explicitly investigated how valuation work produces urban space. In encounters with diverse market participants, emphasis thus lay on comprehending how valuation work hinged on, and in turn co-constituted, particular socio-spatial configurations and tangible urban transformations. This meant encountering interlocutors not merely as market-makers, but also as space-makers, whose routinised economic practices reshaped both the situated urban locations in which they were organised and wider webs of connections and interdependencies across and beyond the city.

The term *'collective enactment'* is employed to analyse how different forms of valuation work rely on, but also become co-constitutive to, particular socio-spatial relations and physical urban forms. 'Collective enactments' of fripe valuation work produce both situated and dispersed urban change processes. On the one hand, fripe valuation often depends on the 'collective enactment' of particular urban locations as sites for valuation work, for instance by consolidating a street as a physical 'marketplace' or by staging consumption performances that produce temporary forms of urban publicness. On the other hand, processes of valuation also set into relation disparate urban locations and market-makers, thus becoming constitutive to coordinated urban rhythms of movement and – often-contested – social and political configurations that structure urban space.

To grasp these situated urban change processes resulting from collective enactments of fripe valuation, my research in different sites of valuation work was never temporally flat. Instead, comprehending how market-making co-produces urban change often required an intentional effort to go back in time, expanding my research from a focus on market-makers to those inhabiting, working in, or governing diverse sites of fripe valuation. For instance, studying the ways in which the fripe wholesale trade had transformed a formerly residential neighbourhood involved conversations with local residents renting to wholesalers, a former car garage owner priced out by the fripe trade, a member of the Tunis municipality and an urbanist who conducted research in the area. Other urban change processes could be observed and recorded first-hand over the course of this research. In addition to 18 months of ethnographic research, a decision against any neat – geographical or temporal – separation between 'fieldwork' and 'analysis' helped me expand such direct observation over a period of more than three years: living in Tunis from 2017 to 2020 allowed me to alternate my analytical work with regular returns to various field sites, enhancing my understanding of marketplaces as entities in-process. I used photos as mnemonic devices for recording tangible changes in the urban environment or socio-spatial ordering

patterns in the markets[108]. To capture more subtle changes to working rhythms, densities or atmospheres, I continued to routinely frequent diverse marketplaces after the supposed 'end' of field research. "Being enveloped" (Anjaria and Anjaria 2020: 237) in such field sites proved a precondition to grasping "the sensual, affective and visceral" experiences (ibid: 239) that often indicated a fripe market's rise or demise as site for valuation.

This introductory section discussed the methodological and conceptual implications of the two questions posed at the beginning: first, centring on the fripe as an unstable commodity requires ethnographic attention to people's practices with fripe objects, here approached as valuation work, as a basis for researching processes of market-making. Second, an emphasis on the diverse actors involved in these processes highlights the need for mobile methods across disparate locations in order to grasp what are termed collective enactments of market-making in urban space. In combination, this approach enables an account of the fripe economy as an agent of urban change, showing how *fripisation* is both constitutive to situated transformation processes and to the emergence of rhythms of movement, geographies of circulation and socio-material densities that tie together diverse actors and urban locations.

The sequence of the three following chapters is chosen deliberately to connect situated enactments of valuation work to wider urban geographies of *fripisation*. To help visualise the market- and space-making processes analysed, photos taken as part of this research are integrated into the second part of this thesis. The photographic material captures the distinct materialities of the fripe economy, illustrates the diverse forms of valuation work discussed, and provides insight into the fripe's role in structuring urban space. Chapter III emphasises the linkages and interdependencies between different sites, actors and processes of valuation work that come to the fore through a focus on a particular fripe circulation. Chapter IV and V then each investigate *fripisation* in a specific marketplace: first, the transformation of a street into a fripe marketplace, and second, the collective performances of fripe consumption that enact a particular marketplace. While the latter two chapters thus examine how collective processes of fripe valuation result in temporary and situated forms of spatial production, their analysis is premised on an understanding of the circulatory mechanisms and the politics of value revealed in Chapter III. Taken together, the three following chapters develop an account of the fripe as a singular urban economy by showing how specific collective enactments of market-making co-constitute urban space in contemporary Tunis.

[108] While photography was part of my ethnographic practice, I remained acutely aware of its risks, abstaining from picturing people unless explicitly asked to/allowed to do so, and from taking photos in places/of practices deemed sensitive, such as the wholesale area *Zahrouni*;

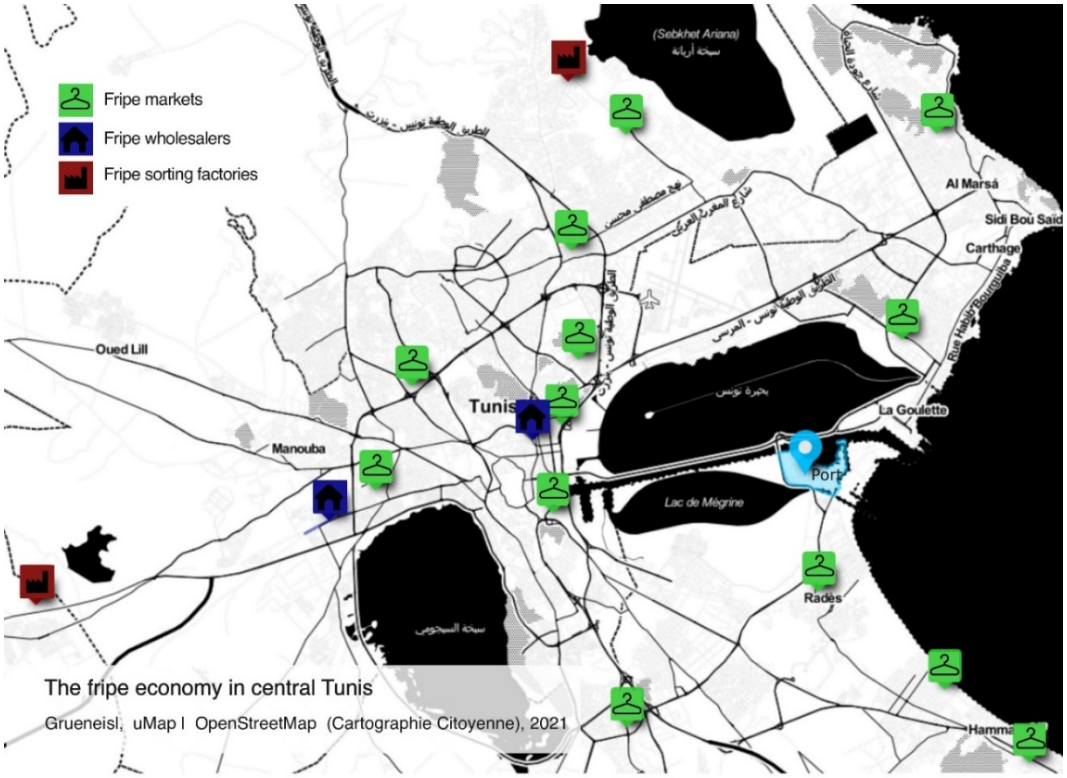

Figure I2.1 Contemporary urban geographies of the fripe economy in Tunis

Figure 6 Protecting fripe shoes against the rain in *Sidi Bahri* (2020)

Chapter III

Urban fripe shoe circulations: the contested valuation of an illicit commodity

Rades container port, Tunis, November 11th 2019:
From his large office window, Mr. H. overlooks the entry to one of the container terminals of *Rades* port[109]. When I comment on the view, Mr. H. laughingly responds: "Sometimes I wish I couldn't see the ships as it reminds me of the excruciatingly slow handling time (of containers) in *Rades,* it's one of the slowest in the entire Mediterranean". Later, as we tour the container port in Mr. H.'s SUV, he explains that his shipping company has stopped transporting fripe several years ago. "I will show you why", he continues, as we take a turn towards the Southern exit of the port area. To our left, piles of containers come into view, some of them half overgrown. "This is abandoned cargo, there is a lot here in *Rades,* because of slow processing, high import duties and problems with the customs". As we continue driving past innumerable abandoned containers, Mr. H. adds: "When the value of goods in a container is uncertain or low, as with used clothing, the risk of abandonment is highest. If there are delays or extra costs, the merchandise never gets picked up and we (the freight company) have to deal with the problem and often make a loss".

Bab El-Falla, Southern *faubourg* of the Tunis medina, October 20th 2018:
On Saturday mornings, the entrance to the *Bab El-Falla* market is permanently congested as grocery shoppers and those coming to buy fripe compete for space in the narrow market street. Ahmed[110] and a group of university friends have come to *Bab El-Falla* specifically to look for second-hand sneakers and thus enter the market through its 'new entrance', directly opening up to what they refer to as "*nahaj al-sbadriyat"* (the sneaker street). In the dense row of sturdy metal shops, colourful sneaker displays dominate the view, with polished shoes suspended from shop ceilings and marquees. The vendors' calls, "*kima jdid"* (like new) echo through the market street, competing with Tunisian rap music that blasts from rattling speakers. Inspecting a pair of Nike sneakers, Ahmed complains that "prices have gone up again, this pair now sells at 140 Dinar (appr. 43 €)". He points to the Adidas sneakers he is wearing and remarks that he got them "for only 100 Dinar in the same shop 6 months ago". The fripe vendor, who overhears the conversation, tells Ahmed impatiently: "these are the wholesale prices for original sneakers, what can we do. If this is too expensive, go across the street and get the same sneakers in counterfeit, for a third of the price".

Linking the container port and the marketplace are different types of fripe circulation that co-constitute the complex urban geographies of *fripisation* in contemporary Tunis. This chapter focuses on the circulations that connect different sites of fripe valuation work and thus reveals disparate and at times inconspicuous processes of market- and space-making, beyond the visible expansion of fripe marketplaces in the inner city. In order to trace such evolving geographies of *fripisation*, this chapter focuses on a particular fripe product, namely shoes, examining how distributed processes of valuation work allow them to circulate as commodities in the city. The analysis of valuation work in this chapter focuses on three locations that feature prominently in the urban trajectory of most fripe items – the sorting factory, the wholesale quarter, and the marketplace. The chapter focuses on fripe shoes specifically to show how despite a shared urban trajectory, processes of valuation and geographies of circulation are differentiated according to product type. Fripe shoes particularly allow for disentangling these differences due to their illicit status: they have been nominally banned from circulation on the domestic market. Both despite and because of this illicitness, fripe shoes have turned into particularly

[109] Appendix I, Interview 8;
[110] Appendix II., Interlocutor 5;

sought-after and expensive commodities in Tunis, and especially original brand sneakers have become a popular consumer choice amongst young people from diverse social classes. At the same time, the shoes' illicitness sheds light on the wide range of state- and non-state actors involved in enabling contingent commodity circulations, offering a particularly complex insight into a collective enactment of fripe valuation across the city. Analysing the contingent movement and stoppage of fripe shoes in Tunis brings to the fore an evolving politics of valuation that creates differentiated opportunities for participation in value production and extraction from this commodity circulation.

The chapter provides close-up ethnographic analysis of situated processes of valuation work with fripe shoes in the sorting factory, the wholesale quarter and a specialised fripe shoe market. It shows how valuation work produces socio-spatial relations that transform these three urban locations, at times resulting in visible processes of *fripisation.* The situated understanding of valuation work this chapter develops provides a precondition to analysing the multiple circulations beyond these sites on which fripe valuation is premised and which it in turn produces. Paying explicit attention to these circulations – not only of fripe merchandise, but also of people, money, information or bribes – elucidates the linkages and webs of interdependencies that tie together diverse actors and spaces involved in valuation work. Consequently, the account this chapter constructs connects seemingly disparate urban change processes bound up with fripe shoe valuation, from the wholesale quarter to a specific market street. Showing how such urban transformations are the product of a particular fripe circulation renders visible the interconnected urban geographies of *fripisation* in contemporary Tunis.

The first section sets out how researching fripe shoe circulations elucidates the collective enactment of valuation work and its role in producing urban space. Subsequently, the chapter turns to three sites that are illustrative of the complex valuation processes fripe shoes undergo in present-day Tunis. First, the fripe 'sorting factory' here denominated SITEX, where imported materials are graded and packaged and are thus transformed from a heterogeneous pile of discard into commodity units of comparable value that can circulate on the market. Second, the fripe wholesale quarter *Zahrouni* where strategic mechanisms of stoppage and movement become the basis for transforming illicit fripe circulations into risky, yet also particularly valuable merchandise. Third, the 'sneaker street' in *Bab El-Falla*, where valuation work in individual shop spaces is premised on the collective enactment of a specialised retail environment that cultivates a particular culture of consumption. For each site, this account begins with an analysis of the situated valuation processes performed with fripe objects, and in particular fripe shoes; it then explores the distinct socio-spatial relations that are produced or transformed through such valuation work; and finally, it investigates the multiple circulations that embed seemingly contained valuation processes in a broader politics of valuation and in evolving geographies of *fripisation*.

Figure III.1 Fripe sneakers are displayed in a Tunis shop space (2018)

1. Fripe shoe circulations and urban geographies of *fripisation*

The final market price of fripe sneakers in the *Bab El-Falla* marketplace cannot simply be traced back to a "bounded locus of production" (Jain 2002: 42) but is the result of a complex and always-contingent urban process. Therefore, comprehending how fripe shoes are transformed from heterogeneous container loads of fripe materials arriving in *Rades* container port into desirable commodities in Tunis marketplaces demands close-up attention to the "dispersed intersubjective realm of circulation and exchange" (ibid) through which value is produced and extracted by diverse actors and in different urban locations in contemporary Tunis. As the next section (a) explains, fripe shoe circulations in Tunis are thus approached as contingent outcomes of situated processes of valuation work. Section (b) then explains how valuation work is researched as constitutive to socio-spatial relations, transforming the particular urban locations in which it takes place, but also establishing new linkages across space. Finally, section (c) sets out how the illicit nature of this contingent commodity circulation illuminates the politics of valuation that bind together, but also establish hierarchies between, the different actors involved.

a. Circulation and valuation work

Two approaches to studying commodity circulation have influenced this research: one starting point to researching commodity circulation has been to follow material things, placing emphasis on their trajectories – and transformations – from production to consumption to discard, and vice versa (Cook 2004; Hulme 2015; Knowles 2014). A second starting point, prominently represented in francophone geography, has been to study social networks and their role in enabling transnational commodity

circulation: from North-African diaspora networks running a cross-Mediterranean suitcase trade (Peraldi 1999, 2002; Tarrius 1995, 2002); to Maghrebi trader communities handling circulations of made-in-China commodities between Asia and North Africa (Belguidoum and Pliez 2014; Choplin and Pliez 2018; Pliez 2012); and networks of particular ethnic groups moving used cars, rikshaws and jewellery (Østbø Haugen 2018(b); Rosenfeld 2018; Tastevin 2014); such literature provides insight into the multi-layered, and often contested, social relations that underpin commodity circulation. This analysis of fripe shoe circulation examines both material things in circulation and their attendant social configurations. However, its focus on the fripe as an unstable commodity places emphasis on situated processes of valuation work as a precondition to circulation.

This understanding of circulation and valuation as mutually constitutive has been central to scholarship on transnational waste and second-hand economies (e.g. Brooks 2015; Crang et al. 2013; Gregson and Crang 2015; Hansen 2000(a), 2000(b); Herod et al. 2014; Lepawsky 2015). This literature has long challenged linear views of value production and commodity circulation. Shifting attention from a single, centralised locus of value production, such research has highlighted the geographically disparate processes of valuation that enable goods to circulate and, through this, in turn transform those circulating materials or objects. Instead of a "commodity chain bracketed by beginnings and endings" (Lepawsky and Mather 2011: 245) – with a single production location marking the 'beginning' and consumption habitually defining the 'end point' – such scholarship draws attention to the diverse after-lives of objects and processes of value production that transform discard materials into commodities at the back end of global value chains. It thus highlights the complex "circuits, networks and meshworks of economic activity" that underpin circulation as always-contingent process (ibid). This chapter draws upon such approaches through its focus on valuation. The emphasis however lies not on understanding transnational dynamics of circulation and value production, but on the valuation processes that allow fripe shoes to circulate at an urban scale. Rather than merely signalling a change in scale, this implies a different focus in researching the specific entanglements between circulation and valuation: emphasising valuation work as a situated practice and as constitutive to urban space.

b. Valuation work and the production of urban space

This account hones in on three locations that have assumed a central role in the valuation work required to bring fripe shoes into circulation in present-day Tunis: the sorting factory, the wholesale quarter and a specialised market street for sneakers. While the first two sites form part of an urban geography of circulation that determines the trajectories of diverse fripe items, the third site highlights the differentiated patterns of circulation of high-end fripe shoes. Sorting factories on the urban peripheries of Tunis have turned into central sites of value production in the fripe economy since the centralisation of sorting through the 1995 sector restructuring. The contemporary wholesale quarter on the South-Western outskirts of Tunis was consolidated during the late 1990s, when a small group of wholesalers established a monopoly over the distribution of merchandise from the sorting factories. The specialised market street for sneakers emerged in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution through an unauthorised process of auto-construction, establishing a specialised consumption space for original branded sneakers.

Zooming in on intricate valuation processes in the sorting factory, the wholesale quarter and the specialised sneaker street, this chapter approaches valuation work as situated in particular urban locations and social configurations. It therefore builds on close-up studies of work processes that reattribute value to waste or second-hand materials *in situ*, for instance in e-waste repair shops (Corwin

2018; Grant and Oteng 2012), on the dumpsite (Millar 2018) or in second-hand marketplaces in diverse contexts (Appelgren and Bohlin 2015(b); Ayimpam 2016; Gregson and Crewe 2003; Hansen 2000(a); Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2019). Such literature hones in on material practices of transformation that requalify waste and second-hand objects as commodities, and on mechanisms of circulation and exchange that bestow "new social and commercial value" on "second-hand things" by altering their meaning (Appelgren and Bohlin 2015(a): 145). These studies also investigate how various practices of recycling, repair and reuse, which are often dismissed because they "do not fit easily into capitalist categories of labour and notions of work" (Millar 2018: 9), in fact become the basis for professional identities and modes of social and political organising.

This chapter builds upon such scholarly work, but interrogates more explicitly how valuation work is not merely situated in, but also constitutive to, distinct socio-spatial configurations. Rather than approaching distinct sites of valuation as mere spatial containers in which valuation work unfolds, this account asks how different forms of valuation work with fripe shoes transform and produce urban space in contemporary Tunis. This means, firstly, examining how situated valuation work with fripe shoes transforms the urban locations in which it takes place, becoming manifest in particular social hierarchies and collaborative relations, as well as in distinct physical urban forms. While most fripe shoes follow the same trajectories of circulation as other fripe merchandise, their particular material constitution, status as consumer good, and nominally 'illicit' character on the domestic market produce differentiated processes of valuation work. From the separate shoe section of the sorting factory, to secret backstreet warehouses for shoes in the wholesale quarter, and a specialised market street for sneakers, this account thus investigates how valuation work with shoes produces distinct socio-spatial arrangements that transform situated urban locations.

Secondly, valuation work is analysed as situated but never contained in particular urban locations. Instead, valuation work is shown to be both reliant on and constitutive to webs of relations and interdependencies. This requires emphasising the mechanisms of circulation that generate connections between different sites of valuation, bringing to the fore the multiple contingencies inherent to the uninterrupted movement of fripe commodities in the city. This empirical focus renders visible circulation not as a seamless flow, but as a complex process of "friction" that requires "interaction in defining movement, cultural form, and agency" (Tsing 2011: 6). In exploring the particular social and political configurations that enable the movement of fripe shoes in Tunis, this research highlights the periodic "creative adjustments" necessary to uphold "economic circuits" (Cholez and Trompette 2016: 148), or the need for "constant adaptation" at the micro-level to sustain a seemingly mundane commodity flow (Hulme 2015: 70). Such evolving mechanisms of circulation are here in turn considered as productive to urban space: patterns of movement, but also strategies of intermittent stoppage, generate distinct urban geographies of *fripisation*, connecting situated processes of urban transformation that occur at sites of fripe valuation.

c. Shoes as 'illicit' circulations and their politics of valuation

The connections between different sites of valuation work also draw attention to the diverse state- and non-state actors involved in the contingent circulation of fripe commodities, especially illicit ones. While classical commodity chain literature typically departs from an assumption of centralised governance – habitually through a lead firm (Hughes 2005: 496) – other research has highlighted the often-contested and shifting power relations between various formal and informal, and state and non-state actors that actually determine commodity circulations (Hughes et al. 2015, Østbø Haugen 2018(a),

2018(b)). Similarly, in the urban fripe economy, power must be understood as distributed across a wide range of actors involved in valuation work. Consequently, this chapter attends to a particular politics of valuation, meaning the unequal power structures determining individual opportunities for participation in the valuation of fripe shoes. First, a quasi-monopoly position for a small group of fripe importers and wholesalers who assume central agency in price-setting, determines – and constrains – all other valuation processes in the fripe sector. Second, strict social hierarchies and tacit "moral economies" – a concept prominently used in economic anthropology to designate social norms and customs ordering economic processes (Guyer 2004; Roitman 2005) – structure valuation work in the three locations here analysed. This draws attention to the differentiated positioning of sorting workers on the factory floor, and unequal power relations between small and large wholesalers, or between shopkeepers and mobile vendors, as well as the norms that mediate these relations. At the same time, the micro-politics of valuation that condition fripe shoe circulations also reveal how individuals can circumvent and at times change their positioning within such rigid power structures by devising alternative strategies of value production.

Additionally, this chapter's deliberate focus on a fripe commodity that has been banned from sale on the domestic market highlights the active role of the state in co-producing a politics of fripe shoe valuation. While 'the illicit' might at times be understood as a sphere lying beyond the influence of the state, this account demonstrates how the fripe shoes' illicit character on the contrary guarantees distinct avenues for state involvement in shoe valuation. Second-hand shoes have been banned from circulation on the domestic market since 1995[111], with legislation stipulating that all shoes imported as 'fripe' have to be re-exported directly from the sorting factories (Journal Officiel 1995). In reality, this ban never prevented the sale of fripe shoes on the local market. Instead, it turned "illicitness" into a "quality of circulation" (Gregson and Crang 2017: 207) that is contingently renegotiated between diverse state- and non-state actors. Rather than a mere legal category, the notion of the 'illicit' is hence variably defined by situated moral economies, that enable diverse actors to benefit from this quality of circulation by participating in "fractal accumulation" (Gago 2017: 15). This examination of the politics of valuation with fripe shoes draws upon accounts that have highlighted how the "co-production of norms pertaining to the illicit" results in an "institutionalisation of transgressive practices" (Bennafla 2014: 1340) that become the basis for economic activity. At the same time, it shows how these politics of valuation remain volatile, at times turning the state into "an array of highly erratic obstacles" (Rabo 2005:10) that have to be variably circumvented or accommodated. The 'illicit' – as performative and negotiable category – is thus productive of both contingencies to circulation and of particular opportunities for profit-making, as it turns the fripe shoe trade into a particularly risky market niche with few competitors.

[111] Like leatherwear, toys and headwear, shoes were banned allegedly to protect public health but more plausibly to shield Tunisian shoe manufacturers from unfair competition;

Figure III.2 Three key sites of valuation work with fripe shoes

2. The sorting factory: transforming discard into categories of comparable value

The fripe containers that are transported from *Rades* port to sorting factories all across Tunisia contain a dazzling variety of garments, shoes and objects, mostly second-hand charity donations but also undeclared surplus stocks and textile waste. Second-hand shoes of all shapes and sizes, spanning worn-out hotel slippers to broken high heels and basketball shoes, are among the wares unloaded in the factories. This section provides an analysis of the particular processes of valuation that take place within a "*maamal al-farz"* (sorting factory), located on the North-Western outskirts of Tunis and denominated SITEX in what follows[112].

The first part examines how labour-intensive sorting processes are organised on the SITEX factory floor to transform heterogeneous piles of fripe materials into neatly graded and separately packaged categories of comparable quality and value that can circulate on the domestic market. Particular emphasis lies on the work accomplished in the separate shoe sorting section of the factory. The second part then explores how such mechanisms of value production are constitutive to distinct socio-spatial relations within the factory. A prerequisite for the qualification of SITEX as a productive entity is the skilled valuation work of senior "*farazet"* (sorting workers), which confers a relative position of authority to senior sorting workers and becomes the basis for a shared occupational identity that is brought to bear in negotiations with the factory management. As the final part examines, the valuation work performed with shoes in SITEX triggers multiple 'illicit' circulations from the factory onto the domestic market. At times, such unofficial 'leakages' hinge on agreements with wholesalers and diverse state actors; at other times, individual *faraza* – as in this case, the senior sorting worker Safa – establish new geographies of circulation that allow them to expand their valuation work beyond the factory gates.

[112] Appendix I, Interview 39;

a. Valuation through sorting: an unorthodox production process

Heterogeneous fripe merchandise, often mixed with trash and the plastic bags in which charity donations were originally given away, are piled up at the SITEX factory entrance. Inside the factory, over 100 predominantly female workers engage in tedious practices of segregation, grading and packaging, which are often subsumed under the term "*farz*" (sorting) in Tunisian Arabic. The creation of value through processes of separation, segregation and sorting lies at the basis of diverse reuse and recycling economies, as it allows for the retrieval of "usable items in a system of downcycling" (Crang et al. 2013: 17). Moving 'down' the value chain thereby often implies a linear dwindling of overall use and exchange values over time. A close-up look at sorting processes in SITEX challenges such a linear narrative and instead demonstrates how sorting lies at the basis of renewed valuation.

The processes of valuation that gradually transform the amorphous heaps of materials unloaded at the SITEX factory entrance involve neither major physical alterations of the fripe materials nor their processing into new commodities. Instead, careful manual assessments of similarity and difference insert the fripe objects into new structures of value and meaning, with the possibility of being transformed and becoming something different. While the individual garments or shoes often remain largely unchanged as they enter and exit the factory, subtle processes of translation move them into new "commodity situations" (Appadurai 1986: 13), allowing them to circulate as merchandise on domestic and re-export markets. Sorting must thus be understood as "a performative process of translation" that "purifies objects as commodities" by breaking negative social ties – here an origin story of discard – and replacing them with new associations (Tsing 2013: 23).

Figure III.3 Unsorted fripe merchandise unloaded at the factory entrance (2017)

Hierarchies of skill, seniority and gender on the factory floor

Most of the sorting, grading and packaging is organised in the large main factory hall. A strict division of tasks thereby structures the SITEX factory floor and translates into a hierarchy of valuation work, differentiated along the lines of gender, skill and seniority.

First, while women carry out the bulk of low-paid, labour-intensive sorting tasks, men occupy positions of authority in the factory, such as the operation of machinery or barcoding and stocks management[113]. This division of work along gender lines must be understood as a result of the feminisation of sorting labour that occurred through the reorganisation of fripe sorting as an offshore activity and as factory wage labour through the 1995 framework legislation. While sorting had previously been accomplished mainly by male fripe traders in the marketplace, the proliferation of sorting factories during the late 1990s and their formal attribution to "*qitaa al-nasij*" (the textile sector) triggered a framing of *farz* as a priori women's work. This was guided by the same exploitative logic of "lower wages" and "easy disciplining" that prompted the hiring of women elsewhere in the offshore textile industry in Tunisia (Ruiz 1993: 51)[114]. Until today, the vast majority of the 8000 -10,000 workers employed in 47 currently active fripe sorting factories[115] in Tunisia are female, and the factory management habitually justifies their hiring policies by referring to the "patience of women with tedious tasks" and the greater sensitivity they bring to textile materials and stylistic choices[116].

Second, an invisible hierarchy of skill and seniority separates the 'front rows' from the specialised sorting tables on the SITEX factory floor. In the 'front row', women separate trash and plastic bags from wearable garments with their bare hands and then dispatch different garment and product types to specialised sorting tables in metal containers on wheels. The handling of discard and the risk of injuries through sharp objects found in the piles of fripe materials render this work particularly unpopular and most women thus start their work in the SITEX factory in the front rows. Most of the front row workers in SITEX are in their early twenties and many have no prior work experience or training after secondary school. Most women joined the factory through personal acquaintances or family members who already worked in SITEX and were hired after a short probation, without prior training. The repetitive separation work in the 'front row' of SITEX comes closest to what is often devalued as "mindless factory work" in the Tunisian textile sector (Ruiz 1993: 51) and is associated with an unskilled workforce of predominantly young women (Hassine 2014: 20).

As the knowledge required for sorting is difficult to abstract or transform into a formal training programme, on-the-job instruction by senior *farazet* takes on crucial importance. Sorting workers with rapid hand movements and a capacity to concentrate for long hours, but also "with an eye for garments*",* as a senior sorting worker explains, can move on rapidly from the 'front row' to specialised sorting tables, where different product types, such as "summer dresses and skirts" or "men's sportswear", are graded into separate categories of value. Senior *farazet* are promoted to the position of supervisors and perform quality checks on the product and value categories assembled by their colleagues. As the *farazet* gradually ascend in the ranks of sorting work, they amass situated knowledge and skills on the sorting process.

[113] This was the case in the three sorting factories in which research was conducted for this thesis;
[114] In 2012, 35.7% of industrial employment in Tunisia was in the textile sector and 86% of textile workers were women (Hassine 2014: 20);
[115] Appendix I, Interview 35; the number of workers might be significantly higher as undeclared work in the sector is rampant;
[116] Appendix I, Interview 5 and 6;

Figure III.4 Sorting workers at the specialised garment tables (2017)

Shoe sorting and assembling the "crème" category

All fripe items that are formally banned from sale on the domestic market – and thus reserved for re-export – are transported in metal containers to a separate concrete barrack behind the main factory hall. Here, shoes, toys, hats and leatherwares are sorted and packaged separately, without entering factory inventories.

Like 'front row' sorting tasks, work in the separate shoe section of SITEX is unpopular because the *farazet* have to work in a bent-down position to assemble matching pairs of shoes amongst the footwear scattered on the concrete floor. Safa, who started her career in the shoe section, recounts that in addition to constant back pain, she and her fellow workers were suffering from extreme cold in winter, and heat in summer, as the corrugated iron roof provides no insulation and a single door ventilates the large barrack. Once the *farazet* have tied together matching pairs of shoes, they sort them into different product groups – such as women's sandals, slippers or sports shoes – and package them into large, non-transparent tarpaulin bags, habitually referred to as "*shkair"* in Tunisian Arabic. In differentiation from the bales that are wrapped around second-hand garments and closed under a bale press in the main factory hall, the *shkair* filled with shoes receive neither bar codes nor factory labels and thus cannot be easily traced back to the SITEX factory once they circulate on the local market.

Figure III.5 The 'shoe section' of the sorting factory (2018)

Only the best quality shoes are scrubbed and dried against the back wall of the factory, and then set aside on a large metal table. Safa[117], who has now worked in SITEX for almost two decades, oversees the work of those who grade the luxury category of fripe shoes, referred to as "*crème"* (cream) in the jargon of the fripe. She thus comes to the shoe section several times a day to collect and transfer the best shoewear to what the *farazet* refer to as "*beit el-krema"* (lit. transl. room of the crème). Separated from the rest of the factory by high, wooden shelves, *beit el-krema* resembles a confined room in the midst of the buzz and noise of the factory and is the place where the *crème* merchandise is assembled and packaged separately into see-through zipper bags, so-called "*sachets"*. Safa works alongside six other female colleagues in *beit el-krema*, all of whom were promoted to the post due to their long-standing expertise. Working in *beit el-krema* implies particular responsibility. By taking the final decision over which shoes enter the see-through zipper bags reserved for *crème* products, Safa watches over the quality of the most expensive fripe category, a task that she deems crucial for building confidence in the 'factory label'. By grading garments into a separately packaged and labelled product category, Safa and her colleagues thus "strip away one category of value and replace it with another", as "the factory label overwrites the individual labels subsumed under it" (Botticello 2013: 41). This process is crucial for restoring the circulatory capacity of second-hand shoes: first, it constitutes a prerequisite to bringing the shoe merchandise into circulation as packaged and thus easily movable commodities for which a fixed price per unit can be negotiated; and second, it confers specific meaning and value to different fripe shoes and thus becomes the basis for new commodity situations on the domestic market or various re-export markets to which the shoes are sent from Tunis.

[117] Appendix II., Interlocutor 6;

b. Remaking socio-spatial relations within the factory

The sorting processes that take place in SITEX not only transform fripe shoes through segregation, grading and re-packaging. The valuation work also generates distinct socio-spatial relations that are constitutive to SITEX as a productive entity and thus indeed as 'factory space'. As the next section explores, the skilled sorting work that allows for value production within SITEX hinges on the tacit and embodied knowledge and experience of senior sorting workers, whose on-the-job training constitutes a continuous investment. As a second section examines, this confers a position of authority to senior sorting workers, favouring the emergence of a female occupational identity as *faraza/farazet* that becomes the basis for renegotiating working conditions and pay in the factory.

Skilled sorting work as a basis for value production

Unlike typical Fordist factory work, where mechanisation accelerates the manufacture of standardised products, the unorthodox production process accomplished in SITEX cannot be totally mechanised nor standardised. While the 'front row' work in the factory can be delegated to unskilled workers who are often paid at or below the minimum wage[118], and who can be easily replaced like elsewhere in the export-oriented Tunisian textile industry (Aliriza 2020(a): 21; Hassine 2014: 27), this is not the case for more subtle grading decisions at the specialised sorting tables. As sorting decisions depend on situated assessments of similarity and difference, the knowledge acquired by *farazet* is both "tacit and embodied" (Botticello 2012: 49) and relies on a combination of experience and sensitivity in the handling of heterogeneous material objects. Safa repeatedly affirms that is it impossible to "explain" how sorting has to be done, and that it has to be learnt "by doing", until you "simply know what goes into which category, what feels right and what doesn't." The lack of formalised product standards or fixed selection criteria in the fripe economy further complicates sorting tasks and renders an implicit knowledge of what 'kind' of garments enters which grade and category indispensable. Safa explains that especially the supervisors need "a real understanding of "*qimet al-silaa*" (the value of merchandise)", as they need to 'balance' slightly higher and lower quality and different brands and styles to produce bales of comparable content.

In addition, as the knowledge that underpins sorting decisions evolves with changing structures of offer and demand, sorting work is premised on a continuous learning process. As has been shown in the case of Igbo apprentices involved in clothes sorting processes in the United Kingdom (Abimbola 2012: 192), the capacity to read fine cultural codes and understand consumer tastes in different contexts is crucial to successful valuation through sorting. Safa and her colleagues thus adapt their sorting decisions in accordance with fast-paced fashion trends and varying consumer preferences in different re-export destinations[119]. As the high-end fripe products from *beit el-krema* increasingly supply vintage shops in Europe, they regularly study "*catalogues de tendance"*, which announce fashion trends and help them guide their sorting decisions for the European market. At times, Safa and her colleagues also receive targeted training sessions, either by the "*grand patron",* as Safa refers to the factory owner, or by clients visiting the factory. As a senior sorter with good command of French, Safa is also in direct contact with two vintage shop owners in France and Belgium who receive high-end merchandise from the sorting

[118] According to sorting workers in two different factories, junior workers are often paid below the minimum wage for the textile sector (0.61€ hourly minimum wage (SMIC) in July 2017);

[119] While export locations vary over the years, the largest quantity of wearable garments is re-exported from Tunisia to West Africa, especially Guinea, see OEC 2017, accessed May 2nd 2020, available at: https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/export/tun/show/6309/2017/;

factory. They update her via *whatsapp* about the latest colours, brands and cuts in demand and one of them visited the factory to organise a personalised training session for Safa[120].

Occupational identities and shifting power relations

The quality of sorting and the production of value in SITEX thus rely on the informed sorting decisions of Safa and her senior colleagues, who therefore control a substantial part of the immaterial means of production in the factory. "What is this factory without us", Safa's younger colleague Mariam asks rhetorically, gesturing towards the workers in the factory hall. "If you imagine this without us *farazet*, you see just an empty hall and some tables." Indeed, replacing experienced *farazet* who can assume roles as supervisors and trainers in the factory is both difficult and costly, and retaining senior sorting workers is thus indispensable to the productive capacity of the factory. This distinguishes senior *farazet* from "disposable" factory workers in mechanised manufacturing, who can be exploited through "a rapid turnover rate" (Wright 2006: 150). As a consequence, the gradual accumulation of experience and skill required to assume seniority in the sorting factory underpin the emergence of an occupational identity as *faraza/farazet* that takes on meaning both within and beyond the factory.

Mariam and Safa thus proudly identify as *faraza* and define their sorting work as a 'craft' that has earned them "*ihtiram"* (respect) in the factory. Deprived of any formal recognition of their status, and in the absence of contractual rights or lawful labour representation[121] in the factory, the *farazet* build on informal alliances and mechanisms for exerting pressure on the factory management. As monthly wages in fripe sorting factories are regulated in accordance with the Tunisian textile sector and remain low despite a regular progression with longevity (Hassine 2014: 20), senior *farazet* negotiate informal concessions or bonus payments that work to their benefit.

[120] Re-export to European vintage shops is common practice, see Appendix I, Interview 4;
[121] Like the vast majority of sorting factories, SITEX has no "*naqaba"* (union); Only 10% of workers in the Tunisian textile sector are unionized (Aliriza 2020(a): 27);

Figure III.6 High-end merchandise is packaged into see-through zipper bags in *beit el-krema* (2018)

c. Shoe sorting as a basis for multiple circulations beyond the factory

The valuation work performed by *farazet* within SITEX cannot be understood as 'contained' but becomes the basis for diverse fripe shoe circulations in disparate geographical locations. As the following section explores, this is so despite the illicit character of fripe shoe circulations on the domestic market, which turns circulations from the factory gates onwards into 'unofficial leakages' from a nominally offshore space that must be embedded in a distinct politics of valuation. In addition, senior *farazet* expand their skilled valuation work beyond the confines of the factory by transporting selected fripe merchandise from their formal work place to diverse resale locations. A subsequent section thus examines how Safa capitalises on her commutes across the city to give meaning to, and realise profits from, her occupational identity as *faraza* beyond the factory gates.

Leakages from the 'offshore' factory space

The law stipulates that all second-hand shoes sorted in SITEX need to be directly re-exported from the factory, under the oversight of the customs agent who remains permanently stationed on the factory grounds. A large sign at the entrance of SITEX reads "area under customs control", recalling the legal status of the factory as partially "offshore" and thus as "legal space of sovereignty" that is supposedly sealed from the domestic "onshore" (Appel 2019: 39). In reality, however, the day-to-day functioning of the factory is premised on continuous leakages, many of which contain fripe shoes that leave SITEX through "*bawab al-tilania"* (the back doors), as one of the factory supervisors puts it. These unofficial leakages or 'illicit' circulations into 'onshore' territory rely on a complex politics of valuation that links the factory to diverse state- and non-state actors across the city. For instance, all fripe shoe sales to Tunisian wholesale traders hinge on agreements with rotating customs agents in the factory, as well as

the police, who are often deliberately positioned in proximity to sorting factories to seize 'illicit merchandise' on the road to wholesale warehouses. While most of the shoes graded in the shoe section of SITEX thus never enter the factory's inventory and the revenues from their sale do not surface in official accounts, a complex array of 'exit fees' or informal taxes are routinely deducted to enable their circulation on the domestic market. A form of "customary illegality" (Gregson and Crang 2017: 209) that requires broad coordination between the factory, wholesalers and diverse state actors thus underpins the circulation of shoes from SITEX to the wholesale warehouses.

The grading and separate packaging of shoes within SITEX thereby determines trajectories of shoe circulation in Tunis beyond the wholesale warehouses. For instance, the separately packaged, high-end category of *crème* shoes only circulates to select marketplaces and boutiques that are either located in upper-middle-class areas or have developed a special reputation for original brand shoes, as is the case with the specialised *Bab El-Falla* 'sneaker street' to which the last section of this chapter turns. In differentiation, the non-transparent *shkair* that contain the rest of the shoe merchandise – and typically carry no inscription apart from the weight and the overall shoe category – circulate to innumerable different permanent and weekly marketplaces or fripe boutiques in the capital, as well as other cities and towns across Tunisia or in Algeria.

Expanding valuation work from the factory to the living room

Smaller contingents of *crème* shoes meanwhile leave the SITEX factory hidden in trolley bags of senior *farazet* like Safa and Mariam, who have used their negotiating power vis-à-vis the factory management to broker weekly allowances of garments and shoes that they can take home from *beit el-krema* as informal supplements to their wages. The regular transport of fripe materials from the factory thus becomes the basis for expanding occupations as *faraza* outside the formal workplace, generating opportunities for value production beyond the wage. Following Safa from the factory to her home on the urban peripheries as she transports fripe merchandise for resale shows how she transfers her professional identity as *faraza* to her intimate living environment and produces new spaces for fripe consumption and female-only sociability.

While Safa at first only supplied her family and friends, she rapidly professionalised her resale activities in her *houma* on the sprawling outskirts of *Oued Ellil,* where fripe merchandise is in high demand as the commercial offer remains scarce and many women find it difficult to access marketplaces due to bad transport connections. Safa produces value not only through the process of careful and often personalized selection in the factory, but also by transporting the garments across the city and by re-embedding them in the intimate social context of her private home. After months of negotiation, Safa convinced her husband and son to leave the house every Saturday afternoon, allowing her to turn the private living room into a temporary space of resale and female-only sociability in a peripheral neighbourhood where meeting places for women and girls are almost non-existent. Safa thus transforms a private space into a site of value production once a week. As she explains, this has allowed her not only to earn crucial additional income for the family, but has also brought her recognition as an experienced *faraza*, establishing social networks that have supported her family on numerous occasions. For example, Safa proudly recounts that her husband found temporary work as an electrician through her connections and that neighbours agreed to assist with otherwise expensive repair works in the house. Even though a need for extra income thus clearly motivated her resale practices in the first place, Safa's valuation work has also generated incommensurable "relational value" (Elyachar 2005: 7) that has altered her standing within her own household and the local *houma* over time.

3. The wholesale quarter: valuation through strategic stoppage and movement

Many of the *shkair* leaving the SITEX factory are transported to *Zahrouni,* an urban area to the West of central Tunis, on the shores of the "*sabkha"* (salt lake) of *Sijoumi*. A dense cluster of fripe wholesale warehouses lines *Zahrouni's* main street, a busy and often-congested connecting road to the Western peripheries. Since the late 1990s, *Zahrouni* has developed into the capital city's main storage and distribution hub for fripe merchandise, with expansive wholesale warehouses and innumerable transport businesses. *Zahrouni* functions as what Rosenfeld describes as "*marché-lieu*" (market-place), a physical space where disparate flows of merchandise are centralised, reordered and displayed to allow for the encounter of offer and demand (Rosenfeld 2018: 65).

Approaching "commodity storage as vital to the production process" (Banoub and Martin 2020: 6), the first part investigates how different wholesalers and intermediary traders extract value from fripe circulations through a complex combination of both intermittent stoppage and coordinated movement. Storing and distributing illicit circulations like fripe shoes therefore requires particular warehouse infrastructures, and implies both risk and distinct opportunities for performing valuation work. As the second part examines, *Zahrouni's* continued functioning as fripe distribution hub hinges on distinct socio-spatial configurations, and has considerably transformed neighbourhood dynamics over the past two decades. The final part then examines how valuation work with illicit shoe merchandise in *Zahrouni* depends on day-to-day circulations that are underpinned by a contingent politics of valuation, tying the wholesale quarter to disparate actors and places across the city.

a. Producing value through different storage infrastructures

The diverse warehouse infrastructures of present-day *Zahrouni* provide differentiated capacities for strategic stoppage and movement of fripe merchandise, both of which are vital to valuation in the wholesale quarter. While the goal of wholesalers is often the rapid circulation of merchandise through their warehouses to expediate sales and maximise profit margins, the "planned, intentional pausing" (Gregson et al. 2017: 384) of circulations equally figures prominently in strategies of value capture. This is particularly true for the storage of illicit fripe circulations, like second-hand shoes. As their storage is risky, fripe shoes need to be hidden away in specific backstreet warehouses, which incurs extra costs for the wholesalers, but also produces a market niche with fewer competitors and thus distinct possibilities for profit-making.

Warehousing as valuation work

The glistening tarpaulin covers of the fripe bales – packaged in green, blue and white – which are piled up in front of the warehouses, dominate *Zahrouni's* main street. White pick-ups and smaller three-wheeled vehicles are parked in front of the warehouses and groups of men sit on piles of bales or on plastic chairs between them. *Zahrouni* developed into the central fripe wholesale quarter of Tunis during the late 1990s, when a surge in fripe imports following the 1995 offshore legislation rendered the existing, inner-city wholesale quarter of the *Hafsia* impractical due to its narrow, congested roads. Wholesalers in *Zahrouni* recount that a powerfully positioned fripe importer with a sorting factory in Jendouba, a city in Tunisia's North-West, promoted the rapid transformation of *Zahrouni* into the city's new wholesale hub. He strategically positioned members of his "*arsh"* (clan) of "*Ayar"* in the warehouses, the same kinship group that had gained prominence in the urban fripe trade since the 1960s (as explored in Chapter II). Transporters and intermediary traders then gradually followed suit, pricing

out local car garages that had dominated the quarter's main road. Until today, the routinised collaboration between large wholesalers – often referred to as "*grossistiyya"* – with smaller wholesalers, diverse intermediary traders and transporters underpins processes of valuation in the wholesale quarter.

A spatial cluster of warehouse infrastructures forms the material basis for performing valuation through storage and distribution in *Zahrouni.* Warehouses of varying size attract a differentiated clientele: intermediary wholesalers or traders redistributing merchandise to Algeria generally prefer large warehouses with a wide choice so they can buy in bulk for several months. Retailers meanwhile, who often buy on a weekly basis, prefer to deal with smaller intermediaries who adapt their limited offer to changing market demand. As the experienced wholesaler Aymen [122] explains, the "*debowat"* (warehouses) on *Zahrouni's* main road actually function predominantly as 'showrooms', with larger warehouses like his own, located off the main road, guaranteeing their continuous supply. Ibrahim[123], who owns a 2x5m sales room on *Zahrouni's* main road, has limited storage capacity and thus receives supplies from larger warehouses on a weekly basis. As Ibrahim insists, the rapid circulation of high-quality merchandise in his 'showroom' make him popular with retail traders and allow him to charge a mark-up on the "real wholesale price", as he puts it.

While the main street 'showrooms' focus on adapting their displays to fluctuating market demand, the strategies of value extraction of larger wholesalers like Aymen often hinge on strategic stoppage rather than "motion without friction" (Tsing 2011: 15). This occurs because "being ahead of the season", as Aymen puts it, or "disclosing the right merchandise at the right time" is key to earning a considerable mark-up. Such strategies of stoppage are all the more important as the wholesalers need to counterbalance seasonal cycles of charity donation: "the factories in Tunisia get summer clothes when people in Europe get rid of them in autumn, so we receive them in winter, but my clients of course want bales of winter clothes then." The intentional retaining of merchandise in backstreet warehouses moreover allows for the creation of artificial scarcity in the front street 'sale rooms', triggering an inflation of wholesale prices. While this form of strategic stoppage is common practice amongst wholesalers all year round, it becomes particularly lucrative during festivities like *Aid Al-Fitr* (the end of Ramadan), when demand for children's clothes soars and the appearance of shortages can significantly increase profit margins.

[122] Appendix II., Interlocutor 7;
[123] Ibid;

Figure III.7 Bales of fripe merchandise stacked in a *Zahrouni* warehouse (2018)

Backstreet warehouses for fripe shoes

Performing valuation through the storage of illicit fripe circulations like second-hand shoes presents both particular challenges and opportunities to *Zahrouni* wholesalers. As registered wholesale warehouses are taxed by the local authorities and are subject to regular inspections by *al-diwana*, the storage of *shkair* filled with shoes is too risky in these official warehouse infrastructures. The visibility of the *Zahrouni* main street showrooms similarly precludes the display of shoe merchandise.

Therefore, unofficial warehouses, habitually referred to as "*debowat al-tilania*" (backstreet warehouses) by the wholesalers, have been set up in the basements of residential houses, private car garages or even rental apartments. Invisible to the outsider, these backstreet warehouses specialise in the storage of fripe merchandise that is banned from sale on the domestic market. Backstreet warehouses tend to have limited storage capacity and are expensive to maintain because wholesalers have to compete with prices on the regular housing market. At the same time, the extra costs and risk involved in the storage of fripe shoes produces a niche with fewer competitors. Aymen, who only reveals after repeated visits and interactions that he runs several small backstreet warehouses in *Zahrouni,* explains that only large wholesalers can afford to join "*bizness al-sbabit"* (the shoe business), because renting backstreet warehouses requires substantial starting capital and because the risk of customs raids imply the need for political connections and savings to be able to mitigate potential losses. This limits competition, allowing wholesalers like Aymen, who possess or rent backstreet warehouses, to charge extra fees for the storage of fripe shoes and to produce artificial shortages that add a considerable mark-up to the original wholesale price.

b. Socio-spatial transformations and the constitution of a fripe wholesale quarter

While the cluster of warehouses provides the visible, material basis for valuation through storage and redistribution, the valuation work performed in *Zahrouni* also hinges on, and in turn constitutes, multi-layered webs of less tangible socio-spatial relations that safeguard transactions and the movement of substantial amounts of fripe merchandise and cash through the wholesale quarter. First, the absence of formal contractual relations in the fripe economy and the uncertain quality of the packaged fripe merchandise have rendered tight webs of personal relations and efficient mechanisms of social control vital to stabilising a set of norms that governs value extraction in *Zahrouni.* Second, the neighbourhood's transformation into a specialised fripe wholesale quarter relied on particular spatial parameters and urban change processes that lastingly altered local urban dynamics, benefitting property owners but also alienating many local residents, and displacing both commercial and residential tenants.

Tacit social norms for regulating value extraction

Shared origins and the belonging to the same *arsh* (clan) feature prominently in accounts of how *Zahrouni* first emerged as a wholesale hub. As different wholesalers and transporters confirm, a particular moral economy that is grounded in family histories of rural-urban migration from Tunisia's North-West, and thus kinship identities, governs interactions in the wholesale quarter until the present day. Consequently, social norms in the wholesale business – reaching from tacit codes of behaviour to gestures of group solidarity – remain linked to *Zahrouni's* origin story and are closely intertwined with "*arushiya"* (clan-based solidarity). Particularly the reference to the clan of the "*Ayar"* – originally a tribal identity from Tunisia's North-West that gained new importance in the urban fripe trade (see Chapter II) – thus remains of central importance. Even young wholesalers like Ibrahim, who were born in the capital, frequently mobilise their identity as "*wulad Ayar"* (sons of Ayar) as a form of "urban kin arrangement" (Pfirsch and Araos, 2017: 4) that serves as a resource for organising working relations. In addition, while many wholesalers profess to only employ warehouse assistants or transporters from the same *arsh*, they in fact rarely recruit from extended family circles today. Rather, they evoke kinship as a form of social control and thus recruit young men from the local neighbourhood, considering that their birth or residence in *Zahrouni* incorporates them into the moral economy that governs the wholesale business.

Ibrahim affirms that the two key assets of a successful wholesaler are "*alaqat"* (relations) and "*ism"* (lit. 'a name'), meaning a social reputation that "has to be continuously achieved" (Rabo 2005: 73). The central importance of reputation built on personal trust – frequently reiterated by all traders in *Zahrouni* – mirrors the uncertainties and risks of the fripe wholesale business. First, the fripe merchandise itself is of uncertain quality and the act of "buying bales blind" (Brooks 2012: 231) carries substantial risk, especially for smaller retailers who need to make profits from every bale to recuperate costs and buy new merchandise the following week. As is the case with other commodities of uncertain value, non-transparent bales and *shkair* reinforce the importance of *"knowability"* and highly personalized relations in transactions (Carrier et al. 2018: 10). The Tunisian saying *"tishri qatous fil-shkara"* (lit. you buy a cat in the bag), prominently employed by fripe wholesalers and retailers alike, captures the risk of buying substandard merchandise or being tricked. This uncertainty qualifies the fripe as "entangled objects" that "can only be known through the actors accompanying them" (Østbø Haugen 2018(a): 1303, 1296), rendering repeated interactions with the same trader a key strategy for mitigating the risk of deceit.

Second, the handling of large sums of cash and credit outside the formal banking system renders mechanisms of social control crucial for safeguarding transactions. As Aymen confirms, almost all purchases concluded in *Zahrouni* are made "*ala kredi"* (on credit) and a time lag between flows of fripe merchandise and payments thus characterises his day-to-day transactions. Aymen's diligently kept notebooks constitute the only written record of his multiple credit relations, and repeated interactions and trust are thus crucial to ensuring repayment. Credit and debt therefore not only structure relations between wholesalers and clients, but also amongst different wholesalers, intermediaries and transporters within *Zahrouni,* resulting in "an interdependency between actors and the common assumption of risk" (Yukseker 2004: 55). If a debtor defaults on a payment, all other credit relations are affected, and a person's "creditworthiness*"* is compromised (Jain 2002: 45). As an intermediary trader, Ibrahim is often debtor and creditor simultaneously, and the temporal coordination of cash flows is often challenging. As has been shown in other realms of commerce that are "essentially credit-driven (…), creditworthiness is a moral as much as an economic quality" (ibid) and for Ibrahim, it represents a crucial precondition for participating in the fripe trade.

Contested urban transformations through shoe warehousing

In addition to distinct markers of collective identity that became the basis for collaboration, *Zahrouni's* transformation into a wholesale hub hinged on the abundant availability of space, both in the form of still undeveloped land and in the form of existing garage infrastructures that could be taken over by the wholesalers. Until the mid-2000s, the fripe wholesale business remained largely confined to *Zahrouni's* main road, where traders gradually priced out car garages, but also other shops and production spaces that had served the predominantly residential neighbourhood. Seif, who used to run a plumbing business on the main road, was forced to leave by his landlord in 2004, when next-door fripe wholesalers outbid him by offering to pay a higher rental price. He describes the arrival of the fripe wholesalers in *Zahrouni* as a "takeover" of the neighbourhood that has alienated many inhabitants and local shop owners. Sitting in one of the last remaining cafes in *Zahrouni's* main street, Seif deplores: "Our entire *houma* has become a "*debo*" (warehouse)." And after a short pause he adds, "the wholesalers are a mafia, they became rich in no time. I saw them arrive here with nothing but their "*shleka*" (slippers) and now they drive big cars".

A boom in the fripe wholesale business during the mid-2000s then further expanded spatial transformations beyond *Zahrouni*'s main street. Especially the flourishing trade with illicit fripe circulations like shoes pushed the wholesale business further into the area's residential quarters for the creation of unofficial backstreet warehouses. The relatively low density of *Zahrouni* thus allowed the gradual filling of vacant lots through the construction of warehouses, garages and housing extensions. While the adjacent urban quarter *Hayy Ezzouhour* had been built up as a dense public housing project during the 1970s (Sethom 1995: 201), *Zahrouni* had become urbanised incrementally through the unauthorised construction of detached residential houses on subdivided and privately purchased farmland (Chabbi 1989: 260)[124]. This meant that family homes with relatively wide private terraces, gardens and garages dominated the area, allowing fripe wholesalers to gradually enter into competition for previously residential spaces. Through the commercial use of private housing by wholesalers, rental prices in *Zahrouni* soared. An elderly couple who rent their ground floor as a storage space for *shkair* explain how they hesitated at first as they worried about raids by the customs. However, they eventually decided to rent out the space because, as the woman remarks, "they (the wholesaler(s)) are paying more

[124] Zahrouni thus belongs to a second generation of informal settlements, built up after 1975 and classified as "*habitat spontané périurbain"* (spontaneous peri-urban housing) to differentiate them from the more improvised, squatter settlements of the first generation (Belhedi 2005: 3,5);

rent than in the city centre, 600 Dinar (appr. 200€) for this (…) and it is humid and hasn't been painted." She says she doesn't mind the deliveries and pick-ups and is happy to not have "the usual noise of downstairs neighbours", now that the ground floor is used as a storage space. Like the elderly couple, many property owners in *Zahrouni* benefit from backstreet warehouses as a lucrative income source, adapting pragmatically to the changed realities of residing in a wholesale quarter. Meanwhile, the increase in rental prices provoked by the wholesalers adversely affected local tenants, pushing out former residents by converting living into storage spaces.

A distinct politics of value extraction from fripe shoe circulations has thus emerged within *Zahrouni* over time, with neighbourhood change provoked by the wholesale activities producing both winners and losers. Today, skyrocketing rent prices, overall scarcity of space and a gradual erosion of the moral economy that had long guaranteed the functioning of *Zahrouni* as a wholesale quarter threaten the neighbourhood's status as the undisputed wholesale hub of Tunis. First, wholesalers recount that soaring prices and the lack of availability of large warehouses has caused a gradual relocation towards more peripheral neighbourhoods of Tunis, like *Sidi Hassine* or *Fouchana.* As Ibrahim explains, while this comes with the disadvantage of losing the density of clients and opportunities for collaboration available in *Zahrouni,* it considerably reduces monthly expenses and limits competition. Many wholesalers moreover deplore the gradual weakening of *Zahrouni's* distinct moral economy – based on enduring social norms and relations – due to the rapid proliferation of unlicensed wholesalers and intermediary traders, especially in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution. As Aymen recounts, cut-throat competition has given way to covert price-cutting and mutual poaching of clients, eroding trust between wholesalers and marking a breakdown of the mechanisms of social control that used to govern value extraction in *Zahrouni.*

Figure III.8 A van is loaded with *shkair* containing fripe shoes, to be dispatched to Tunis marketplaces (2018)

c. Contingent shoe circulations to and from the wholesale quarter

The functioning of *Zahrouni* as a wholesale quarter relies not only on a fragile, internal politics of valuation between different wholesalers and transporters, it is also dependent on continuous, coordinated flows of merchandise, cash and customers that animate the wholesale quarter. These diverse circulations embed *Zahrouni* in a broader politics of value extraction in the fripe economy that incorporates various state actors, nominally on the grounds of the fripe shoes' character as 'illicit circulations' on the domestic market. This section thus examines, first, how seemingly mundane, day-to-day shoe circulations into and out of the wholesale quarter are in fact premised on complex profit-sharing agreements and contingent negotiations with various state actors that participate in the urban fripe economy. Second, it hones in on the valuation work performed by Hassan, a young man from *Zahrouni* who has expanded his valuation work beyond the wholesale quarter. By transporting shoe merchandise between the backstreet warehouses and marketplaces across the city, he navigates a multi-layered politics of valuation that holds both risks and opportunities.

Contested value extraction from illicit circulations

In *Zahrouni,* wholesalers recount that "symbiotic relations" with various state actors always regulated shared value extraction from fripe shoes and other nominally banned circulations, creating common stakes in their "illicitness" (Bennafla 2014: 1348) over time. From the establishment of the first warehouses*,* Aymen recounts, political accords at the highest level secured the neighbourhood's role in distributing banned fripe merchandise to Tunis marketplaces.

However, many wholesalers and transporters working in *Zahrouni* complain that "*al-thawra"* (the (2011) revolution) has rendered encounters and collaboration with different state actors increasingly unpredictable. Power reconfigurations at the micro-scale – often directly related to the post-2011 breakdown of clientelist party politics which had functioned as a "one-stop shop" (Allal 2016: 26) – triggered a destabilisation of the political accords governing shared value extraction from fripe shoe circulations. Therefore*,* diverse members of the police forces, the customs authorities, as well as local officials – all of whom tend to be indiscriminately referred to as *al-hakim* by the fripe wholesalers – have come to participate in rent extraction from shoe circulations "*ala hisabhum"* (on their own accounts), as Ibrahim declares. What wholesalers and transporters describe as a decentralisation of corruption over the past two decades has thus produced new uncertainties that render it more risky and costly to handle shoe circulations than ever before. Frequent fires in *Zahrouni,* often provoked to pre-empt raids by the customs or police, have become emblematic for a breakdown of stable profit-sharing agreements from illicit circulations. At times, raids have even triggered open confrontations between security forces and wholesalers in *Zahrouni* (Espace Manager 2016(a)). Referring to a fire in a shoe warehouse in February 2018, Ibrahim reflects on the wholesale quarter as "an electric circuit". He ponders: "As long as everything runs smoothly you don't think about it, but once the connection is broken, nothing works and one spark can set the whole thing on fire".

Performing valuation work with risky circulations

Processes of value extraction from fripe shoe circulations through warehousing in *Zahrouni* depend on the subsequent movement of *shkair* from backstreet warehouses to marketplaces and boutiques across the city. This risky undertaking not only requires close collaboration between wholesalers and transporters in *Zahrouni,* but also wider agreements with various state actors across the city. As a consequence, transporters who earn a living from handling shoe circulations to and from the wholesale

quarter on a day-to-day basis are both particularly exposed to, and at the same time a constitutive part of, the evolving urban politics of valuation that characterise the 'fripe shoe business'.

Hassan[125] was born in *Zahrouni* and began working in his uncle's small wholesale warehouse when he was only 16, after having dropped out of secondary school. He recounts that he hated working as a warehouse assistant for his uncle, because of "bad relations" but also the physically demanding work of moving fripe bales in the warehouse, and loading and unloading trucks. Hassan put aside all of his savings for years and then invested in a second-hand, white pick-up truck three years ago that now allows him to work as "*chauffeur kamyouna"* (lit. van/truck driver) between *Zahrouni* and diverse markets and boutiques of the capital. Hassan recounts that he decided to specialise in the transport of *shkair,* and particularly fripe shoes, from the outset, describing it as a "booming market" and "an opportunity" because many transporters shy away from handling illicit circulations.

For Hassan, "moving goods" represents "a means of realising profits" (Gregson and Crang 2017: 212) and the greater the risks of stoppage and interruption he faces, the greater his potential profit margin. Hassan explains: *"*Everyone can transport fripe, but work with *sbabit* (shoes) is more difficult, you need a lot of connections, in *Zahrouni,* in the markets and with *"al-bolis"* (the police)." On his transport rides with *shkair* between *Zahrouni* and diverse urban marketplaces, Hassan thus continuously mitigates risks of stoppage, confiscation and fines. At times, he uses tactics of evasion, involving lengthy detours or collaboration with transporters who operate with handcarts and can enter markets like *Bab El-Falla* through narrow back alleys. Alternately, Hassan times his deliveries according to the rotation of particular police officers, with whom he has developed routinised mechanisms for profit sharing. He usually pays set fees in cash from the glove box of his van, depending on the amount of merchandise he carries, and says the fees can amount to about 20% of the value he carries in the loading area. When set agreements or strategies of circumvention break down, Hassan can also be confronted with the confiscation of his entire merchandise or with temporary arrest and fines.

In exchange for navigating this difficult and risky terrain on a day-to-day basis, Hassan says he reaps a substantial risk bonus for every successful journey he completes and occupies a market niche with fewer competitors. His capacity to extract value from fripe shoe circulations therefore depends on webs of social relations that stretch across the entire capital city, from *Zahrouni* to innumerable fripe retail spaces and diverse branches of the security forces. Hassan thus explains that he strategically devotes a substantial part of his working time to socialising with traders in different marketplaces, visiting wholesalers in the warehouse quarters, and paying favours to *al-hakim.* As he details, attending to these different levels of "*alaqat"* (relations) – and investing both time and parts of his profits in them – is a routine part of his valuation work and allows him to mitigate future uncertainties.

[125] Appendix II., Interlocutor 8;

Figure III.9 Illicit shoe merchandise often enters the marketplaces on handcarts through back alleys (2018)

4. The sneaker street: performing valuation in a specialised consumption space

The most expensive category of shoes transported from *Zahrouni* to Tunis marketplaces – at times packaged in *shkair* and at times enclosed in the see-through *sachets* reserved for the *crème* merchandise – are often second-hand sneakers, a commodity in high-demand on the Tunisian market. Especially original branded sneakers are thus usually transported to high-end retail spaces in the capital that are frequented by an upper-middle-class clientele, such as the covered *Menzah VIII* market or the *Ibn Khaldoun* fripe market. In addition, specialised boutiques and market streets offering exclusively fripe sneakers have proliferated in Tunis over the past decade, with one of the most reputed shopping destinations located in the *Bab El-Falla* market in the Southern *faubourg* of the Tunis *medina.*

The following section centres on "*nahaj al-sbadriyat"* (the sneaker street) in *Bab El-Falla,* to examine how vendors perform valuation through distinct strategies of display and the joint curation of a specialised shopping environment catering to a young, predominantly male clientele and a consumer culture that valorises the "original" over what is "new". Subsequently, the second section explores how the valuation work performed in *nahaj al-sbadriyat* hinges on, first, the spatial cluster of auto-constructed shoe shops that forms an informal expansion of the existing *Bab El-Falla* fripe market; and second, on mechanisms of social coordination amongst fripe shoe vendors that enable coordinated bi-weekly rhythms of shoe circulation and thus a rapid renewal of merchandise. The final section then investigates the diverse mechanisms of collaboration with actors beyond the confined sneaker street that ensure uninterrupted circulations of sneakers into, and out of, the shoe shops and thus provide the basis for valuation work: first, contingent negotiations of 'illicitness' – regarding both the traded merchandise and the shoe shops' unauthorised occupation of municipal land – characterise relations between the shoe traders and diverse local state actors. Second, multi-layered distribution relations

between individual shoe traders – here the sneaker shop owners Fethi and Montassar – and diverse formal and informal traders and resellers transform the sneaker shops from "points of final consumption" into starting points for new circulations and thus "meshworks of economic activity" (Lepawsky and Mather 2011: 245).

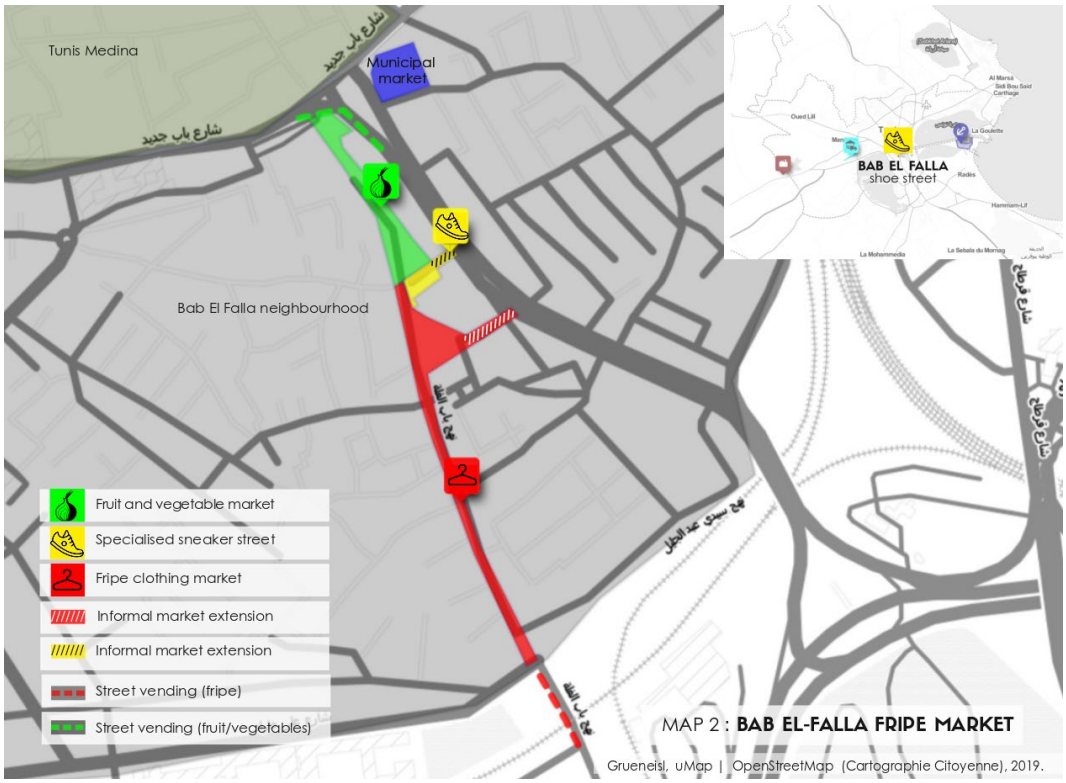

Figure III.10 The *Bab El-Falla* fruit and fripe market with the sneaker street

a. Valuation work with second-hand sneakers

Diverse forms of valuation work are performed with second-hand sneakers in the different shop spaces of *Bab El-Falla*, with vendors devising intricate strategies of display that help them maximise sales, as well as mechanisms of differentiation that set their shops apart from adjacent competitors. At the same time, such individual valuation strategies are embedded in a collective effort to cultivate a specialised retail space that caters to, and invigorates a nascent consumer culture around second-hand sneakers. Turning the 'sneaker street' into an attractive environment for a predominantly young and male clientele who have come to value 'original' branded sneakers over new shoe merchandise thus forms the necessary basis for performing successful valuation work in the different shop spaces.

Curating the 'sneaker shop' and strategies for distinction

Fethi[126], who alongside his younger cousin Montassar[127], owns a prominently positioned shop at the centre of the sneaker street of *Bab El-Falla,* can be easily recognised by the brightly coloured baseball caps and sneakers he wears all year round. Fethi, who has now worked in the same shop space for almost ten years and has specialised in the sale of high-end fripe sneakers from the outset, spends most

[126] Appendix II., Interlocutor 9;
[127] Ibid;

of his time in the shop, even on Mondays when the market is closed. While he assures that he has "no particular strategy" for curating his shop's interior or for displaying his wares, a close-up observation of his careful valuation work in the sneaker shop demonstrates the opposite.

Before and after market closing hours, as well as on the days with little customer traffic, Fethi dedicates considerable time and effort to the reorganisation of his shop's interior, creating new sneaker displays at least twice a week. Fethi explains that he and Montassar quickly decided on a division of work whereby Montassar manages purchases, payments and supplies outside the shop, while Fethi is responsible for the shop space itself. Whenever he receives new merchandise from *Zahrouni*, Fethi inspects the pairs of sneakers one by one before deciding which of them will be exhibited in the shop. "I only choose original brands and best quality for the shop*",* Fethi proudly proclaims, as he points to a pile of footwear behind him that he has judged substandard. With the help of his young shop assistant, Fethi then cleans the sneakers that will be displayed, sitting on a small plastic stool at the centre of his shop. "When the *farazet* in the factory do a shitty job", Fethi laughs, "we use these brushes", and he shows an array of brushes of different size, with the smallest resembling a toothbrush. When the sneakers are clean, he polishes them with a cloth and then applies shoe shine spray and fragrance to them. The smell of the fragrance and shoe spray linger in Fethi's shop, which he judges important, "because this takes the typical fripe smell away and replaces it with something fresher". The most thought and time then go into the curation of the new shop display, a task Fethi visibly enjoys and never delegates to his assistant. He has installed iron bars on the ceiling from which he suspends shoe merchandise on metal chains, with each pair of sneakers dangling from a hook at a particular height of the chain. This display system allows Fethi to exhibit a large amount of sneakers, and produces a particular visual effect for customers looking in from the outside, heightened by Fethi's skilful play with the colour spectrum of the sneakers.

In addition, Fethi has invested into what he refers to as "*tasmim al-hanout"* (shop design), aiming to curate a shop environment that effectively stages the exclusivity, or "brand authenticity" (Edensor and Kothari 2006: 330) of his sneaker offer. The shop's interior, featuring a sparklingly clean tiled floor, and colourful neon lights, intentionally distinguishes it from adjacent shoe shops. Even Fethi's powerful sound equipment that drowns out the music of surrounding competitors and his young age and fashionable style contribute to the special aura that turns his sneaker shop into one of the most popular attractions of the sneaker street, despite high prices. "We are all side by side (the shoe shops)", says Fethi as he points up and down the shoe street, "so I always need to do something that looks a bit different to make sure customers stop at my shop".

Figure III.11 A vendor cleans a pair of fripe sneakers in his shop (2019)

Cultivating a consumer culture of the 'original'

While the shoe traders in *Bab El-Falla* at times complain about fierce competition amongst adjacent shop spaces, they also highlight the competitive advantage they gain from forming a specialised cluster of shops. The sneaker vendors have thus invested collective effort into the curation of a specialised retail space for second-hand sneakers. As Fethi and Montassar explain, *"al-sbadriyat"* (sneakers) have become an important status symbol amongst young men in Tunisia, and the circulation of global imagery, especially linked to rap music, determines rapidly changing local fashion trends. The specialised retail space of the 'sneaker street' thus both shapes emerging consumer cultures, and the space is itself constituted by evolving consumption practices (Lemarchand 2011). The shiny sneakers, neat shop displays, and loud music attract young men from across Tunis, like Ahmad and his friends who pass by regularly after university. As Ahmed smilingly confides, they often come for "*shoufing",* a pun combining the Arabic word "*shouf*" (see) and the ending of "shopping" to designate a shopping tour that consists of "seeing what is new without buying". Fethi says this is exactly what the shop vendors want, "*nahaj al-sbadriyat* needs to be an attraction, a place young people like to go to even if they don't have money but just some time to kill". Indeed, many of the young men coming into Fethi's shop do not necessarily come to buy, but want to see new sneaker models and designs, or seek Fethi's expertise on particular materials or technologies developed for the sneakers. On a special shelf, Fethi thus sets aside what he calls "special and rare *sbadriyat"* that he excludes from sale but proudly presents to his clients, demonstrating his expert knowledge.

The specialised retail environment of the *Bab El-Falla* sneaker street thus both capitalises on, and further cultivates, a consumer culture amongst young Tunisians that values "*al-assil/al-original*" (the original) – here in the form of branded second-hand sneakers – over "*al-jdid"* (the new). The spatial separation of the sneaker street from the *Sidi Boumendil* market just across the road, which is specialised

in "*silaa kontra"* – as counterfeit merchandise is often generically referred to – is thus crucial to upholding the fripe sneaker street's reputation for selling only 'original' or 'authentic' brands. While the second-hand sneakers in *Bab El-Falla* often sell for three times the price of the same models in the counterfeit market, Ahmad underlines his preference for "original brands and designs*"*. He explains: "you can get the *kontra* shoes cheaper, sometimes the same models, but you feel the bad quality of the materials and they just don't look the same. I can see from a distance whether someone wears originals or fakes." As is the case in other contexts, the dominance of counterfeit products has attached new significance to "authenticity" which is often equated to brand identity (Ayimpam 2016: 271; Edensor and Kothari 2006: 330). Branded sneakers that are imported new to Tunisia remain unaffordable for the vast majority of young people, therefore buying them second-hand is the only option for accessing internationally circulating brands and fashionable designs in the 'original', albeit with a time lag. When Ahmed thus laughingly refers to the fripe as "*demoqratiya haqiqiya"* (real democracy), he alludes to the opportunities it brings for participating in what has been described as "youth cosmopolitanism" (Scheld 2007: 248) or "globalized youth culture" (Weiss 2009: 42), prominently expressed in practices of dress that both imitate and reinvent global fashion. The prominent role of smartphones in the *Bab El-Falla* sneaker street underlines the "transnational character of the commodity culture" (Crang et al. 2003: 447) that has emerged around the desirable second-hand circulations. In situated negotiations over quality and market price in the sneaker street, both vendors and clients frequently employ their smartphones to establish connections to the 'original' products, comparing market prices in the US or Europe to Tunisian second-hand retail prices or images of the new shoes to the models arriving as second-hand wares in the Tunis marketplace.

b. Constructing and enacting the 'sneaker street' as a specialised retail environment

The different forms of valuation work currently performed in the sneaker street are premised on particular socio-spatial parameters that emerged, first, through a process of auto-construction in the *Bab El-Falla* market and, second, the collective enactment of a dense row of shops as the 'sneaker street'. While the 'sneaker street' has become consolidated as a physical structure and has developed a reputation as a specialised retail environment over time, it depends on continuous processes of temporal coordination amongst its traders to continue functioning as a basis for valuation work.

The auto-construction of an unauthorised market extension

Until the 1990s, *Bab El-Falla* was mainly known for its sprawling fruit and vegetable market (Berry-Chikhaoui 1994: 348). Fripe traders then began to gradually establish a permanent presence in the main market street during the mid-2000s, and a decade later, fripe trading had taken over at least half of the market. The weakening of public oversight and police presence in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution, which triggered a rapid proliferation of street markets (Brown et al. 2017) and made-in-China trade in central Tunis (Doron 2015), then provided a window of opportunity to expand the already-booming fripe market in *Bab El-Falla.*

A group of young male traders thus seized an unoccupied patch of municipal land adjacent to the existing fripe market that had been used before as a football pitch by children and youth from the neighbourhood. Fethi and Montassar, both of whom had grown up in *Bab El-Falla* and had previously worked in the market, recount that a group of young fripe traders from *El-Morouj,* a Southern suburb in Tunis, joined forces and occupied the plot overnight in the early summer. They erected concrete foundations for their shop spaces in record time to pre-empt immediate attempts of removal by the

municipality. Fethi and Montassar – as well as other young people from the area – were then quick to join the occupation, setting up the foundations for their own shop space "in a single night", as they affirm. "Whoever could find an empty plot just took it", Montassar remembers, "some got lucky and others didn't". He recounts that the young men who had initiated the process of auto-construction had agreed upon a standard plot size and had limited construction to two dense rows of shops that would form a new 'market street', preventing traders from seizing the plots in the middle. Benefitting from the political turmoil in summer 2011, the traders remained undisturbed by the authorities during the auto-construction of 23 sturdy metal shop spaces over the following weeks. Fethi explains that everyone was building in a frenzy, borrowing construction materials from one another and pooling resources to accelerate the overall process for fear of confronting *al-hakim* (the state) before the market street's consolidation. By June 2011, the auto-constructed shops formed a dense new entrance to the *Bab El-Falla* market, connecting it to the *Sidi El-Bechir* thoroughfare, the main vehicular access to the area.

While fears of instantaneous confrontation with *al-hakim* proved unfounded, the young traders were instead faced with the anger of established fripe traders in *Bab El-Falla,* who opposed the unauthorised and unjust process of appropriation by 'outsiders' and feared the additional competition the new traders would generate. As Fethi and Montassar had close connections to traders in the 'old market', they assumed a central role as mediators in this conflict, preventing attempts to destroy the auto-constructed shop spaces. "What really helped in the negotiations with the other fripe traders", Montassar explains, "was the decision to specialise in merchandise that was not really traded in the market until then. Some of us were thinking about selling sneakers anyways, because business with sneakers was really becoming big, and now we had another reason (to do so)". Convincing other traders that the new market street would function as a specialised retail space that would cause no direct competition to existing fripe shops and stalls, and would even attract a new clientele to the market, thus gradually appeased relations. Following the principle of specialised trading streets in the historical "*souk"* or "*bazaar"*, the auto-constructed market street of *Bab El-Falla* thus turned into a specialised 'sneaker street'. For the young traders, the sneaker business provided a promising market niche and the cluster of specialised shops could become a basis for building a reputation. Reiterating the principle of the *souk* that "a good shop location is where both customers and competitors thrive" (Rabo 2005: 31), most fripe traders of the *Bab El-Falla* fripe market today agree that the 'sneaker street' has played a crucial role in consolidating the market's reputation and in drawing customers from across Tunis.

Mechanisms of coordination for the specialised sneaker street

Transforming the auto-constructed market street into a specialised sneaker street required distinct patterns of temporal coordination and mechanisms of collaboration amongst the traders from the outset. Until today, the dense row of shop spaces needs to be continuously enacted as a 'sneaker street', with joint, bi-weekly rhythms of purchase, delivery and turnover of merchandise determining the temporalities of valuation work performed within it.

First, the joint organisation of purchases, deliveries and payments in *Zahrouni* greatly increases the shoe vendors' negotiating power vis-à-vis the wholesalers and allows them to benefit from bulk prices for the expensive sneaker wares. In addition, pooling the transport of illicit sneaker merchandise considerably reduces costs for individual traders and means that the risk of confiscation or fines is distributed across several traders. Rhythms of delivery of new sneaker merchandise in the *Bab El-Falla* shoe street are thereby structured around the bi-weekly "*halan al-bala"* (bale opening), the moment when new merchandise is disclosed in the marketplace (expanded upon in Chapter V). While the days of joint bale opening in *Bab El-Falla* remain unwritten rules, most fripe vendors synchronize

temporalities of delivery and disclosure in order to hold bale openings on Tuesday and Saturday mornings.

The traders in the new sneaker street joined these coordinated rhythms of bale opening to benefit from the particular socio-material densities these generate in the marketplace. Over time, especially the Saturday bale opening in the sneaker street has turned into "an attraction", as Fethi says, that draws clients from across Tunis to the shoe street in the hope of being the first to inspect 'new' merchandise. The bi-weekly bale openings in the sneaker street are thus crucial to accelerating transactions and allow traders like Fethi to rapidly offset their investment in new merchandise by earning the bulk of his profits on two mornings a week. Meanwhile, the rapid turnover of sneaker merchandise required to uphold this bi-weekly rhythm of bale opening would be impossible to maintain alone, as both Fethi and Montassar affirm. Not only strict temporal coordination, also diverse mechanisms of cost-sharing and mutual assistance amongst the traders in the sneaker street thus form a crucial basis for successful valuation work (expanded upon in Chapter IV).

Figure III. 12 A handcart is being pushed into the narrow *Bab El-Falla* sneaker street (2019)

c. Enabling uninterrupted circulations through the sneaker street

The exceptional popularity of the *Bab El-Falla* sneaker street must thus in part be linked to the bi-weekly renewal of offer – and thus the rapid circulation of sneakers into, and out of the market street – that guarantees clients new finds during each visit. Valuation work is therefore premised on uninterrupted circulations, which in turn hinge on contingent agreements with diverse state and non-state actors operating beyond the confines of the sneaker street: first, ensuring flows of nominally illicit merchandise to the specialised retail space – itself precariously positioned on squatted municipal land – necessitates agreements with the police and local officials that generate common stakes in the shoe

business. Second, upholding the rhythms of circulation that guarantee the rapid renewal of offer in the shoe shops requires traders to devise systems of redistribution with diverse resellers.

Negotiating the 'illicit' as a quality of circulation

For shoe vendors to ensure the uninterrupted circulation of sneakers both into, and out of, their shop spaces twice a week, they also rely on a careful tending to "co-produced norms*"* (Bennafla 1999: 37) with various state actors that govern the shoes' illicitness in circulation. Generating and distributing a "situational rent" (ibid) is crucial to creating common stakes in the continuation of the profitable fripe shoe trade. Notions of the 'licit' and 'illicit', which pertain not only to the shoe merchandise, but also to the shop spaces' unauthorised occupation of municipal land, are thus renegotiated through various tacit accords with customs officials, the police and local authorities in *Bab El-Falla.*

A current working agreement with the police for instance limits interference to 'merchandise-in-circulation', meaning moments of delivery of new *shkair* from the wholesalers. Once the fripe shoes have entered the *Bab El-Falla* shop spaces and are displayed to consumers, the police abstain from confiscations or fines. This modus operandi, which limits illicitness temporally to a particular commodity situation, avoids jeopardising the flourishing trade in the sneaker street and yet ensures regular opportunities for rent extraction by the police. A separate agreement with local officials has so far protected the unauthorised shop spaces of the sneaker street against demolition. While most shop owners now possess "*batendas"* (licenses) and are thus de-facto formalised through tax payments, municipal officials also informally collect profit shares, using this type of "'*rashwas'* (bribes) as a way of informing citizens about rules and regulations" (Rabo 2005: 152). At other times, profit shares are offered to local officials as "favours*",* as Montassar says, to ensure support in critical moments. The importance of investing in good relations with local officials became apparent in July 2017, when the Tunis governorate initiated a clearance campaign targeting informal markets (Le Monde 2017). While the perimeters of the campaign included *Bab El-Falla*, only one fripe shop fell victim to the clearances. The municipal official who was later charged with the relocation of displaced vendors in *Bab El-Falla* agreed that "all of this (the sneaker street) should have been removed in the *"hamla"* (campaign)*",* but then also added that "the market works, it's a success, so what interest do we have in destroying it?"

Provisioning relationships beyond the shop space

On the other hand, the need to renew merchandise in the shop spaces twice a week necessitates a rapid recuperation of costs and the cultivation of multiple "provisioning relationships" (Bestor 2001: 77) beyond the sneaker street to ensure the regular resale of leftover merchandise. The weekly rhythms of trade in the sneaker street thus demonstrate that the shoe shops do not merely represent "endings*"* of a value chain (Lepawsky and Mather 2011: 247), but rather function as simultaneous spaces of consumption, redistribution and divestment where some circulations end, and others begin.

Between the bi-weekly bale openings, Fethi and Montassar's shop thus intermittently turns into a redistribution location, as leftover shoe merchandise is sorted into different categories of quality and brand value, is then re-packaged in *shkair* and distributed on the basis of multi-layered agreements. Attending to the multiple relations of provisioning and supply that extend from the small shoe shop "is a full-time job", as Montassar explains, who says he is "on the road all week". Both Fethi and Montassar underline that it would be impossible to run the shoe shop alone. "I'm the face of the shop, I need to be here for clients and to settle issues with other market traders*",* Fethi explains, "so I need a second person who moves around, either to get "*silaa"* (merchandise) or to distribute what is left." Montasser only

joins Fethi inside the shop on the bale opening days to assist with sales, and laughingly teases him as he adds, “I am glad I don’t see his face much during the rest of the week.”

Montassar explains that it’s not the procurement of new *shkair* from *Zahrouni,* but the redistribution of leftover *silaa* from the shop space that takes up the bulk of his working hours. The primary customers for unsold sneakers are other fripe traders, mostly those running smaller “*boutikat”* (shops) who do not take the risk to buy directly from wholesalers, but purchase at reduced bulk prices from marketplaces. The fact that Fethi grew up in *Bab El-Falla* and that part of his family still reside in the area helped him strike relationships to various boutique owners in the surroundings, whom Montassar visits on a bi-weekly basis to offer leftover merchandise for resale. He also supplies several *boutikat* in his new residential area *Mourouj* that have either specialised in shoes or sportswear. The second-choice shoe merchandise is meanwhile passed on to “*nassaba”* (street vendors) who resell the sneakers on market peripheries or on the sidewalks of the central city. As Fethi explains, trusted relations with several *nassaba* have been crucial to the success of his business from the outset, guaranteeing a rapid disposal of second-choice merchandise in exchange for a profit share. Montassar usually hands over the leftover merchandise to the *nassaba* for free, and then receives a fixed percentage of the profits in return. A final, smaller part of the unsold merchandise goes to “*farazet”* (sorters), mainly women who frequent the market after closing hours or before new deliveries are made to sift through leftovers and buy cheaply at bulk prices. Fethi usually sets aside a pile of sneakers which he judges substandard for the *farazet*, charging a symbolic bulk price or even handing out damaged or worn-out shoes for free. The destinations of the fripe shoes from Fethi’s shop space are thus multiple, and many shoes enter new trajectories of valuation and circulation, on the “*berwitas”* (handcarts) of street vendors or in female-owned tailor shops on the urban peripheries where some of the *farazet* resell their wares.

Figure III.13 Sneaker brands are advertised on a house wall adjacent to the specialised market street (2019)

5. Conclusion

The *Bab El-Falla* sneaker street was spared from the 2017 clearance campaign of the Tunis governorate against informal markets and street vendors in the city centre. However, many of the *nassaba* that had been reselling the leftover merchandise of the sneaker shops were displaced in the violent police campaign. This in turn adversely affected business in the sneaker street, as bi-weekly resale agreements with the *nassaba* collapsed and as shoe shop owners consequently saw themselves confronted with a surplus and storage problem, as well as a lack of income from resales. Therefore, the shop owners of the sneaker street delayed purchases from *Zahrouni,* affecting wholesalers running backstreet warehouses and transporters specialised in the movement of risky shoe merchandise.

While only the *nassaba,* and thus resellers positioned at the bottom of hierarchies of valuation work with fripe shoes, were directly impacted by the governorate's campaign, it nonetheless had knock-on effects for multiple actors and locations implicated in fripe shoe valuation in the capital. This indicates, first, the crucial importance of diverse circulations as – always contingent – basis for situated valuation work. Second, it renders explicit how seemingly contained sites and processes of valuation work are premised on connections across space and collaborations between diverse state- and non-state actors. Finally, it underlines both the stark hierarchies and multiple layers of interdependency that define an evolving politics of fripe shoe valuation in contemporary Tunis. Even the various state actors who routinely participate in value extraction from the nominally 'illicit' fripe shoe circulations were thus affected by the ruptures caused by the Tunis governorate's market clearance.

This chapter has examined how *fripisation* occurs through situated valuation work with fripe shoes in in three key sites of value production in the contemporary urban fripe economy, resulting in localised urban transformations. Through a focus on the mechanisms of circulation linking these valuation sites, it has also shown how seemingly localised processes of urban change are interconnected through particular rhythms and patterns of fripe shoe movement and stoppage. This renders visible the urban geographies of valuation work that set into relation seemingly disparate processes of *fripisation* in contemporary Tunis: it connects different sites and processes of urban change, from prominent sites of *fripisation* in the central city to habitually invisible spaces of valuation work, like private living rooms on the urban periphery or backstreet warehouses. The specific politics of valuation with fripe shoes examined in this chapter conditions where and when opportunities for market- and space-making arise and determines who can become an agent of urban change, thus shaping evolving geographies of *fripisation*. The next chapter builds upon the understanding of city-wide mechanisms of fripe circulation developed in this chapter to analyse a situated process of market-making that transforms a central Tunis street into a specialised fripe marketplace.

Figure 7 Summer fripe displays in *Rue du Liban* (2018)

Chapter IV

The *fripisation* of *Rue du Liban:* the conflicted remaking of market boundaries

Walking past the covered *Sidi Bahri* market for fresh food products, the ever-growing prominence of fripe traders around the main market square is unmistakeable. Fripe stalls have taken over some of the former trading spaces for fruit and vegetables and fripe boutiques have opened up in old butchers and grocery shops, so that second-hand backpacks and summer dresses are now dangling from canopies next to fresh chicken and dried red peppers. Continuing northwards from *Sidi Bahri* into the street *Rue du Liban,* a continuous fripe trading landscape stretches across two intersections and the tram lines, far into the colonial-era residential quarter of *Lafayette*[128]. In the most densely occupied middle section of *Rue du Liban,* fripe boutiques occupy the left side of the road, while the opposite roadside is taken up by stalls selling fripe merchandise. A mix of roofed metal stall structures and more improvised vending stalls are positioned side-by-side, offering a dazzling array of second-hand bags, belts, accessories, shoes and garments that change with the season.

Mariam[129], who has lived in *Rue du Liban* for over 50 years, deplores what she describes as a process of *fripisation* that has unfolded in front of her ground-floor living room window. Like Mariam, other residents of *Rue du Liban* have witnessed their street transform rapidly, from a residential space dotted with some neighbourhood commerce and small workshops, into one of the most popular and densely occupied fripe markets in the centre of Tunis. This chapter examines how *fripisation* has transformed *Rue du Liban* into a consolidated marketplace and continues to drive processes of market proliferation in and beyond the street today. The analysis shows that this fripe marketplace is neither a static spatial entity nor a mere ephemeral appropriation. Rather, through a close-up examination of the processes of market-making that underpin *fripisation,* the market appears as a 'place' that operates in a tension between spatial consolidation and proliferation. The practices of diverse fripe traders form the empirical basis of this examination of market-making, showing how their making of the market as a physical space is inextricably linked to the creation of a joint circulatory mechanism for fripe merchandise. The traders' dependence on a consolidated marketplace for performing valuation work through fripe sale is in tension with the market's dependency on rapid temporalities of movement, primarily of merchandise, but also of people, payments or waste. Therefore, processes of making and unmaking market boundaries are central to comprehending the entanglements between market- and space-making that comprise the *fripisation* of *Rue du Liban.*

This focus on *fripisation* as an on-going process of boundary-making shows how fripe marketplaces are constituted as evolving forms of socio-spatial order. This contrasts with legacies of governing urban marketplaces through visible orders of spatial enclosure, explaining why fripe markets like *Rue du Liban* have been selectively targeted as 'problem spaces' by the city authorities. While the fripe has become consolidated as a distinct market form, it has remained illegible under the registers of market order devised by government in colonial and post-independence Tunis. This illegibility accounts for contemporary uses of *fripisation* that reduce market-making processes in the fripe to "*fawda"* (chaos) and associate the phenomenon with a weakening of the state in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution. To analyse the incompatibility of abstract imaginaries of 'the orderly market' with actually existing forms of market order in a site like *Rue du Liban,* this chapter discusses the failed implementation of a market

[128] Lafayette was built up between 1900–1930 by both European and Tunisian architects, largely as a residential neighbourhood hosting a cosmopolitan and multi-faith population. The out-migration of large parts of the Jewish and Christian-European populations of Tunis during the 1960s and 1970s led to radical social change in the neighbourhood, see Sebag (1998: 685);

[129] Appendix II, Interlocutor 16;

clearance and relocation campaign in the fripe market in 2017. It examines how the attempted relocation of the fripe market to an enclosed site and thus the market's internal reordering upset the market processes, meaning the joint mechanisms of circulation that guarantee *Rue du Liban*'s functioning as a fripe market.

To emphasise these complex interrelations between market processes and market forms, this chapter is structured in two distinct parts. The first part is devoted exclusively to an analysis of contemporary market processes in *Rue du Liban* to comprehend the evolving socio-spatial order of the fripe marketplace; the second part examines the fripe's historical constitution as a contested form of market order, demonstrating how *fripisation* remains illegible as an ordering process of urban space and thus selectively becomes the target of repressive governing. The first part starts by setting out how this analysis of *fripisation* in a Tunis street brings into dialogue research on urban marketplaces – primarily interested in markets as 'places' in the city – and literature on marketization – analysing processes of market-making. It then examines the micro-level processes through which different fripe traders enact *Rue du Liban* as a specialised fripe market, and thus as a site for valuation work through fripe sale. Joint mechanisms of circulation and on-going practices of boundary-making render visible the market's socio-spatial ordering patterns and account for its shifting delimitations in space. Against the backdrop of this analysis of the fripe market as a spatial entity in process, the second part begins by examining the historical stigmatisation of unenclosed and itinerant urban markets and governmental attempts to impose order. It then examines how the fripe trade developed as a hybrid market form that evaded both fixity and enclosure. A final section returns to *Rue du Liban*, investigating how a relocation campaign by the Tunis governorate failed because its imaginaries of static market order were at odds with the on-going processes of boundary-making on which the existing fripe market depends.

Figure IV.1 Fripe shoes are on sale in a former poultry butcher shop in *Rue du Liban* (2018)

1. Market-making in *Rue du Liban:* investigating *fripisation* as on-going process

A complex array of micro-level processes of market-making underpin *Rue du Liban*'s constitution as bustling fripe market. Diverse market traders collectively enact the formerly quiet, residential street as marketplace, through circulatory mechanisms that allow for valuation work with diverse fripe materials. Mechanisms of spatio-temporal coordination in the market street have become consolidated as socio-spatial ordering patterns that characterise *Rue du Liban* as a singular urban market form. At the same time, the fripe market's continued functioning as a site for fripe valuation hinges on routinised practices of space-making through which different traders variably draw and enforce, or transgress and blur, market boundaries. The fripe market is therefore co-constituted as a spatial entity in-the-making, evolving on the basis of negotiations – and at times contestations – between diverse market participants, from traders with highly different positionings in market hierarchies, to agents of the local state or the police forces. Before turning to an in-depth ethnographic investigation of these market processes in *Rue du Liban* (in 1b and 1c), the next section outlines the distinctiveness of an approach to urban marketplaces that centres on the entanglements of market- and space-making that constitute marketplaces as spatial entities in process.

a. Valuation work and the production of evolving market landscapes

Two opposing conceptions of 'urban space' can be distinguished in most academic writing on urban marketplaces. A first body of work tends to approach the marketplace as an already-constituted and stable spatial entity, and often equates 'the market' with a clearly delimited urban infrastructure, such as the "covered marketplace" in European cities (Gonzalez and Waley 2013) or the "*bazaar*" (Keshavarzian 2007) or "*souk*" (Rabo 2005) in Eastern cities. With the spatial parameters of the market assumed to be defined and fixed, such research typically focuses on the relations unfolding within the marketplace, qualifying them variably as public spaces of encounter and social interaction (Gonzalez and Waley 2013; Hiebert et al. 2015; Watson 2009), as sites of cultural production (Appelgren and Bohlin 2015(b); Gregson and Crewe 2003) or political mobilisation (Keshavarzian 2007). This static conception of space has also informed framings of marketplaces as inherently "authentic" or "traditional" urban sites, often in the context of gentrification or urban restructuring (Gonzalez and Waley 2013; Gonzalez 2019; Marinelli 2018). Conversely, a second body of literature, predominantly but not exclusively concerned with cities in the Global South (Mörtenböck and Mooshammer 2015), centres on what tends to be categorised as "informal" or "street markets" (Evers and Seale 2015). This literature frequently approaches the spatial parameters of markets as ephemeral or in-flux, focusing on the contestations over urban space that come to the fore in continuous cycles of occupation, expulsion and re-appropriation (Abaza 2014; Boonjubun 2017; Huang et al. 2014; Morange 2015: 253; Steck et al. 2013; Young 2017).

As this chapter shows, these two bodies of literature create a false dichotomy between the market as a static 'place' and the market as an ephemeral occupation. This dichotomy has perpetuated and reinforced often-taken-for-granted distinctions between planned and unplanned, formal and informal, or Northern and Southern marketplaces. The on-going process of *fripisation* in central Tunis discussed in the chapter is neither an already-constituted and stable urban marketplace nor is it merely an ephemeral proliferation or "kinetic form in constant motion" (Mehrotra 2002: 98). Instead, an empirical investigation of *fripisation* demands investigation of the distinct processes through which urban space – here a central street of Tunis – is collectively enacted as site of fripe valuation, and in turn becomes consolidated as a specific market form. It thus requires establishing explicit linkages between the

ontology of urban fripe marketplaces as sites of circulation and exchange, and their evolving spatial constitution and appearance in present-day Tunis.

In order to do so, this chapter builds upon a processual understanding of the market, bringing the explicit interest in processes of market-making from marketization literature to conceptualising urban marketplaces (Berndt and Boeckler 2011, 2012; Çalışkan and Callon 2009, 2010). While marketization literature has placed emphasis on the performative enactment of markets through the models and knowledge of 'economics' as discipline – and associated calculative devices – the approach has also been adopted in empirical studies of the constitution of particular commodity markets (Çalışkan 2010), housing markets (Farías 2014) or small enterprise programmes (Elyachar 2005). Such inquiries seek to understand how markets are "situationally produced and performed" (Elyachar 2005: 146), emphasising the role of "improvisation and experimentation" in producing contingent market encounters (Farías 2014: 360) and the particular "configurations of power" that allow markets to function at particular points in time (Çalışkan 2010: 207). Such approaches to studying complex processes of market-making can complement literature on urban marketplaces, which has often shown surprisingly little interest in "scrutinising (street) trading per se as an economic activity" (Morange 2015: 253), or, more generally, in exploring the economic processes that underpin phenomena of market proliferation in different cities. In other words, while the ontology of marketplaces as sites of circulation and exchange is often taken for granted, it is rarely brought to bear in the analysis of the spatial constitution or changing forms of urban marketplaces.

It is thus the goal of this chapter to explicitly link market processes and market forms, or economic and spatial practices, in its analysis of *Rue du Liban's* enactment as specialised fripe market: empirical focus lies on exploring the complex "work of making order" (Hoffman 2017: 6) that underpins the street's functioning as site of collective valuation work, and in turn determines evolving market forms. As this account demonstrates, only a close-up attention to market processes can render intelligible 'forms of order' that are "travelling the divide between material or immaterial, aesthetic and social patterns" (ibid). An ethnographic focus on "routinisation" as a basis for "formal rule-making" (Roitman 2007: 159) here implies a close-up analysis of the fripe traders' individual and collective routines of valuation work that translate into both consolidated and proliferating market forms in *Rue du Liban.*

First, section 1b explores how *Rue du Liban* turned into a prominent 'marketplace' for valuation work with diverse fripe materials in central Tunis. Multiple circulations – and first and foremost, circulations of fripe merchandise – underpin valuation work in contemporary *Rue du Liban*, therefore requiring coordination mechanisms that allow traders to accelerate such circulations through the market street. As the following analysis demonstrates, both *Rue du Liban*'s status as commuter thoroughfare and the rapid pace of turnover required for successful fripe valuation influenced such emerging circulatory architectures. The synchronised mechanisms of circulation that today distribute opportunities for fripe valuation in *Rue du Liban* across different – permanent and mobile – traders point to market-making as a necessarily collective undertaking. In addition, such circulatory architectures have become manifest in socio-spatial ordering patterns and physical market infrastructures, providing insight into *fripisation* as a situated urban change process consisting not merely of proliferation, but also of consolidation. To examine the emergence of *Rue du Liban* as a collective enactment of fripe valuation work, the chapter relies on, first, ethnographic engagement with diverse fripe traders – both shopkeepers and mobile street vendors – who were involved in the establishment of the fripe market. Second, conversations with local residents, non-fripe shop owners in *Rue du Liban*, as well as municipal employees responsible for the adjacent *Sidi Bahri* market provide 'outside' perspectives on the change processes brought about by fripe trading. Finally, direct observations of the mechanisms and temporalities of circulation in *Rue du*

Liban open up the intricacies of valuation work that underpin what might at first sight appear as simple sales practices of individual fripe traders.

Second, section 1c illustrates how the *Rue du Liban* market's sustained functioning as a basis for fripe valuation is premised on continuous, collective enactments in urban space. Preserving the market's consolidated patterns of socio-spatial order – which in turn stabilise its foundational circulatory mechanisms – rely on painstaking efforts of boundary-making through which market traders delimit the market and define selective rules of access and participation. Yet the accelerated rhythms of circulation required to perform fripe valuation also necessitate diverse boundary transgressions through which traders incorporate the confined market street into broader cycles of fripe circulation and valuation. These routinised, ongoing practices of boundary-making and boundary transgression thus show the market's co-constitution as an "intricately functioning field of power" that needs to be maintained through "continuous interventions" (Çalışkan, 2010: 202, 207). The spatial processes that guarantee the market's functioning exist in a tension between consolidation and periodic movement, involving "processes of territorialisation, of sharpening boundaries" and the preservation of a vital "proliferating dynamic" through porous boundaries that allow for flexible adaptation or negotiated access (Gago 2017: 68). Tangible processes of *fripisation* in *Rue du Liban* thus appear in a new light, representing not ephemeral proliferations but the result of precise mechanisms of circulation and valuation that translate into space-making. For this understanding of market boundaries as – often intangible – socio-spatial constructs that are variably enforced or transgressed, the chapter builds on observations and conversations obtained through the repeated shadowing of market traders in *Rue du Liban.* Traders who occupy starkly different positions in market hierarchies were shadowed, so as to comprehend the differentiated market-making practices that co-constitute the market as a porously bounded, and contested or intensely negotiated, spatial entity.

Figure IV.2 Fripe shops densely line the formerly residential *Rue du Liban* (2019)

b. Transforming *Rue du Liban* into a site for collective valuation work

How did the residential street of *Rue du Liban,* dotted with only a few grocery stores, workshops and bakeries in the early 2000s, turn into, first, a site of *fripisation,* and today, one of the most popular fripe markets of central Tunis? What micro-level processes of market-making allowed different fripe traders to collectively enact the street as a prominent site for valuation work through 'fripe sale'? To answer these questions, the following section analyses the coordination mechanisms through which shopkeepers and "*nassaba"* (street vendors) collectively transformed *Rue du Liban* into a fripe market, thereby enhancing their individual valuation work with diverse fripe materials. In the first part, it explores the collaboration between shopkeepers and *nassaba* to devise a system of two-fold circulation for fripe merchandise through the market street. In the second part, it turns to the synchronised rhythms of circulation that allow traders in *Rue du Liban* to achieve a rapid turnover of merchandise, accelerating cycles of valuation and increasing the attractiveness of the marketplace. The account centres on Kamel as a key protagonist, one of the first fripe shopkeepers in *Rue du Liban* and a resident of the street who witnessed and co-produced its gradual transformation.

Mechanisms of double circulation as a basis for market-making

During the day, *Rue du Liban* appears as a densely occupied street market, with shop front displays and diverse "*nasba"* (vending stalls) – from tarpaulin-roofed metal structures, to handcarts and more improvised cardboard tables – occupying the sidewalks and part of the roadside. The narrow passageway in the middle is permanently clogged with pedestrians, motorbikes and delivery trolleys. Only in the early morning or after market closing hours does the street's original layout become visible, as stall structures are dismantled or stored away in the fripe shops. *Rue du Liban's* division into permanent shop spaces and mobile vending stalls in fact lies at the heart of comprehending the process of *fripisation* that transformed this formerly residential street.

The fripe trader Kamel[130], now in his late fifties, recounts that he was one of the first traders in *Rue du Liban* who transformed his grocery store into a fripe boutique in 2005. Living two floors above his shop space, Kamel observed the success of fripe street vendors from his balcony in the early 2000s: "The *nassaba* reselling the fripe of the *Sidi Bahri* boutiques started to come up to our street, because it gets a lot of movement*",* he remembers. Indeed, as a direct axis between the *Sidi Bahri* market, the adjacent central bus station and innumerable office spaces, *Rue du Liban* always constituted a prominent commuter route and thus presented a strategic location for the *nassaba.* Kamel recounts the immediate success of his fripe boutique, which subsequently encouraged a neighbouring grocery shop and a former metal workshop to follow his example. With the success of the fripe shops, demand rose for commercial spaces in *Rue du Liban* by the late 2000s, and Kamel and his neighbours were thus quick to rent out empty garages as shops or unused hallways as storage spaces, accelerating the transformation of *Rue du Liban*. Soon, Kamel recounts, commuters intentionally re-routed their way to and from work through *Rue du Liban,* attracted by the growing cluster of fripe shops. In turn, this drew in increasing numbers of *nassaba* who relocated with their stalls from other marketplaces like the *Hafsia,* where customer movement was largely limited to the weekends.

While some of the shop owners and local residents opposed the influx of *nassaba* and the growing commercial density in *Rue du Liban,* Kamel claims that he immediately recognised the opportunity that lay in striking accords with the itinerant traders. Considering that "trade brings trade and customers

[130] Appendix II., Interlocutor 10;

bring customers" – a basic principle that has governed specialised market streets in *souks* for centuries (Rabo 2005: 31) – Kamel assessed that the *nassaba* could be of great help in solving the storage problem in his small shop space. He thus began to hand over fripe merchandise that had remained unsold or that he judged substandard to the *nassaba,* who resold the merchandise at reduced prices and paid him an approximate share of their profits in return. Two young street vendors, who set up their stalls directly opposite Kamel's shop space, became his first trading partners. As he explains, they paid a fixed daily amount, "like a rent", in exchange for the vending space and for storing their merchandise and sales tables in Kamel's shop overnight. Kamel also negotiated with the local police on their behalf, paying what he refers to as "regular taxes" to protect them against police harassment and stabilise their occupations of the street and sidewalk. The deal with the two young *nassaba* considerably improved Kamel's revenue and allowed him to renew his fripe offer more frequently, which in turn improved his shop's reputation with customers. Over time, other fripe shopkeepers in *Rue du Liban* thus followed suit, entering into similar agreements with *nassaba*.

Figure IV.3 Fripe shops and stalls of the *nassaba* occupy opposite roadsides in *Rue du Liban* (2017)

The collaboration between shopkeepers and *nassaba* in *Rue du Liban* gradually stabilised into a system of two-fold circulation of fripe merchandise that became manifest in a particular market form. After a first round of sale in the shops, unsold merchandise is resold at reduced prices on the stalls of the *nassaba,* usually directly opposite. Through lasting working arrangements between shop owners and *nassaba* – at times verging on non-formalised employment relations – many stall traders have consolidated their vending positions in the street over time. Particularly in the dense middle section of *Rue du Liban*, the vendors have marked their initials in bright colours on the wall of the adjacent parking lot to entrench their day-time occupations. While during the day-time, the stalls and boutiques of *Rue du Liban* seem to function as autonomous entities, at night-time the stall structures and their merchandise are neatly stored away in the shops. As nodal points in the system of two-fold circulation, the day-time 'boutiques' of *Rue du Liban* transform into storage spaces overnight, or what have been

referred to as "*magasin-entrepôts"* (shop-warehouses) in the made-in-China trade in Tunis (Doron 2017:11). Intricate systems of re-packaging and stacking merchandise, and folding or disassembling temporary stall structures and street furniture thus occur at sundown in *Rue du Liban.* Once the metal shutters of the fripe boutiques have been closed, nothing but the colourful initials on the wall of the parking lot and leftover pieces of the characteristic tarpaulin packaging of the fripe on the tarmac testify to the existence of the dense day-time market. While the *nassaba's* appropriations of the sidewalks and street space violate official regulations, profit-sharing agreements with state employees and the police have stabilised such occupations. Both employees of the "*mouatamadiya"* (district administration) – who regularly frequent the fripe shops of *Rue du Liban* to collect taxes – and local police units thus unofficially tax the *nassaba,* earning profit shares from the lucrative system of two-fold circulation.

While the division of *Rue du Liban* into permanent shops and improvised stalls seems to indicate a clear hierarchy between shopkeepers and *nassaba,* the working agreements between different traders in fact testify to mutual dependency in the enactment of the specialised fripe market. For shop keepers, the cooperation with *nassaba* not only increases overall profit margins and turnover speed, it also decreases the risk that comes with buying "*silaa khaiba"* (bad merchandise) from the wholesalers. The possibility of immediately passing on substandard or faulty fripe products to the *nassaba* allows shopkeepers to recover at least a part of their costs, without risking the reputation of their shops by exposing bad quality garments. The *nassaba* on the other hand depend on the permanent shop infrastructures and leftover merchandise to operate in the street at minimal cost and risk. Through resale at reduced prices, they often attain a higher overall volume of transactions and in fact generate the bulk of profits made in the *Rue du Liban* fripe market. Most importantly, as the next section explores, the rapid pace of turnover required to extract maximum value from fripe merchandise can only be upheld through continuous spatio-temporal coordination between shopkeepers and *nassaba,* defining market-making as a necessarily collective undertaking.

Figure IV.4 The *Rue du Liban* fripe shops turn into storage spaces overnight (2020)

Synchronised mechanisms of circulation and the emergence of distinct market forms

The rapid movement of fripe merchandise through *Rue du Liban* – one of the key preconditions to successful valuation work in the market – relies not only on resale agreements between shopkeepers and *nassaba,* but also on strict temporal coordination of weekly circulations through the market street. While the speed of turnover is crucial for profit-making in any marketplace, the rapid decline in value that follows the moment of bale opening in the case of the fripe renders the swift circulation of merchandise particularly crucial for the generation of value in fripe markets. As the moment of "*halan al-bala"* (bale opening, discussed in Chapter V) – or the disclosure of new merchandise – and its immediate aftermath constitute peak value for fripe commodities, the frequency of bale openings in part determines the success of fripe marketplaces. Therefore*,* as this section outlines, strict mechanisms of temporal coordination are the basis of the collective enactment of *Rue du Liban* as fripe market: synchronised circulations – not only of fripe merchandise, but also of cash, tax payments, leftovers and waste materials – constitute a key competitive advantage for valuation work and thus in part explain the rapid *fripisation* of *Rue du Liban.*

On Wednesday and Saturday mornings, the slogan, "*bala jdida, bala jdida"* (new bale), "*malla bala"* (look at this bale) or, "*silaa jdida, min bala jdida*" (new merchandise, from a new bale) echo from the house walls of *Rue du Liban*. On these two days, *halan al-bala* is collectively organised in the market street and customers from across Tunis are attracted by the opening of new fripe bales. Even outside the coordinated bale opening times, fripe traders in *Rue du Liban* can often be observed cutting open new bales, whenever the crowd is dense enough to make the performance worthwhile. A "desire for newness" attracts customers to the public bale openings, with 'newness' in the context of the fripe translating as "wrinkles and folds" from the bale press to ensure that bales haven't been pre-inspected or pre-sorted, but come directly from the sorting factory (Hansen 2000(a): 183). In the beginning, Kamel recounts, the fripe shops of *Rue du Liban* lacked a coordinated rhythm for *halan al-bala,* which meant that different traders opened bales at irregular intervals depending on individual cycles of purchase and delivery. As a consequence, Kamel explains, clients didn't consider *Rue du Liban* "a real fripe market", but merely a "street with some shops". Through the stabilisation of resale agreements with *nassaba,* the speed of turnover in the fripe boutiques accelerated and new bales were purchased more frequently. The logistics of purchase and payment in the wholesale quarter, as well as transport to and from the market, consumed time and money and eventually prompted fripe shop owners to agree on a joint rhythm of deliveries. Receiving new merchandise in bulk, at first once a week and with growing success twice a week, reduced transport costs and minimised the congestion caused by delivery vans in the narrow market street. When levels of trust grew, some of the fripe traders also pooled purchase and payment in *Zahrouni,* with experienced traders like Kamel negotiating on the others' behalf.

The synchronisation of deliveries enabled a regular, bi-weekly rhythm of bale opening that continues to structure the working week of fripe traders in *Rue du Liban.* This includes the *nassaba* who receive leftover merchandise twice a week, before the arrival of new bales. The acceleration of deliveries and thus, the renewal of offer in the shop spaces, has prompted Kamel and other shopkeepers to expand their collaboration with *nassaba* over time: frequent, almost exclusively cashless transactions thus characterise routinised interactions between different fripe traders in *Rue du Liban* today. "Everything works on credit now, we know each other (…), we owe the *"grossistiya"* (wholesalers), we owe each other amongst the *fripiers* (fripe traders) and the *nassaba* owe us for the merchandise*".* Both circular credit obligations and collaboration agreements remain unwritten, and trustful relations with other shopkeepers and *nassaba* are thus of central importance. Sharing a coffee with the neighbouring shopkeeper Anis one morning, Kamel recounts that some shopkeepers were hesitant or refused to adapt

to the synchronised rhythms of circulation in the market street. Both Kamel and Anis however assert that those who "wanted to do business on their own" failed to survive in the market street. Anis, who converted his hardware shop in *Rue du Liban* into a fripe boutique roughly a decade ago, emphasises: "in the fripe trade you quickly realise you are nothing as an individual (…), our success here is based on working together". Anis stresses that the collaboration of traders is not only required to "move merchandise through the shop" but also to "manage relations" with wholesalers as well as diverse local state actors who want to extract profit from the flourishing market.

Rue du Liban's distinct circulatory architectures – which in turn underpin frequent bale openings and the rapid renewal of fripe offer – are central to explaining the market's exceptional success, and thus status as a prominent site for fripe valuation. This success has prompted fripe traders from across Tunis to relocate to *Rue du Liban,* resulting in soaring rent prices and competition for space: Wassim[131], who moved to *Rue du Liban* from the *Hafsia* fripe market, explains that the frequent *halan al-bala* motivated his decision. He recounts: "In the *Hafsia,* no one opens bales during the week, many of the traders are old and just sell the stuff they already have". According to Wassim, this has not only tarnished the *Hafsia*'s reputation over time, it also caused storage problems in his shop and resulted in the rapid devaluation of his fripe merchandise. Specialised in second-hand fur products during the winter months, and beachwear in summer, Wassim says his coats were ruined by humidity and moths, while the summer merchandise suffered from exposure to the sun and dust. "The fripe is best when you first pull it from the bale, that's when you can charge the highest prices", he explains, "but after you need to lower prices quickly, and storing the merchandise or hanging it outside means it gets ruined quickly." Therefore, trading in a marketplace that keeps pace with a bi-weekly rhythm of turnover and enables rapid cycles of resale is central to generating profits as an individual vendor. While Wassim's new shop in *Rue du Liban* is smaller and more expensive to rent, he says that *"barsha circulation"* (a lot of movement) in the new location compensates for these higher costs.

Countering portrayals of *fripisation* as ephemeral market proliferation, the joint circulatory mechanisms and harmonised market temporalities that underpin collective valuation work in *Rue du Liban* show market-making as an intricate, collective enactment that transformed the formerly residential street into a bustling fripe market. The two-fold circulation of fripe merchandise – as well as diverse other circulations through the market street – are enabled through the traders' careful "calibration and measure" (Simone 2018: 18) that reveals the specificities of market-making with the fripe. From the fripe merchandise's ever-uncertain quality and short-lived peak value, to the market street's physical division into permanent shop spaces and mobile stalls, distinct "cooperative hierarchies" (Keshavarzian 2007: 195) underpin the *Rue du Liban* market's functioning as a 'stage' for valuation work. Over time, these cooperative hierarchies have become stabilised in distinct "spatial and temporal frameworks" (Bestor 2004: 20), and thus market forms. At the same time, however, as is explored next, upholding the market's functioning as a site of collective valuation work requires continuous efforts of space-making that both consolidate market occupations and flexibly accommodate movement into and out of the market to preserve its circulatory essence.

[131] Appendix II., Interlocutor 13;

Figure IV.5 Fripe bales are unloaded in *Rue du Liban* (2019)

c. Market-making as an on-going spatial process: enacting a porous boundary regime

In *Rue du Liban,* the term *fripisation* isn't merely used to describe the residential street's transformation into a fripe market. It is also employed to capture a sense of constant proliferation and movement of the market, as remaining garages and shops are being converted into fripe boutiques, and as the *nassaba* relocate northwards and southwards, as well as into perpendicular residential streets. While the middle section of *Rue du Liban* thus features relatively stable occupations, the extraordinary commercial success of the market street has attracted ever-greater numbers of traders and customers, translating into shifting market densities and evolving patterns of occupation. Consequently, the fripe market remains in-the-making, with market boundaries being periodically redrawn or redefined.

The following two sections thus explore how market-making in *Rue du Liban* occurs through on-going spatial practices through which market boundaries are performatively enacted and reconfigured. For this purpose, the routinised practices of boundary-making and boundary transgression of three traders are analysed: Kamel, the shopkeeper introduced in the preceding part; Bilel[132], a young *nassab* specialised in fripe trading; and Mohamed[133], an elderly vendor who makes a living on the market peripheries. Focusing on three traders occupying starkly different positions in the market hierarchies sheds light on market boundaries as relational constructs that become visible only in their effects on different market participants. On the one hand, collective valuation work in *Rue du Liban* hinges on the persistent enforcement and policing of market boundaries, and different market traders thus draw lines between 'inside' and 'outside' that define selective conditions for access and regulate circulations

[132] Appendix II., Interlocutor 11;
[133] Appendix II., Interlocutor 12;

through the market street. On the other hand, valuation work inside the market street relies on continuous circulations across market boundaries, so that traders establish relations that extend the marketplace outwards or negotiate exceptional rights of access and possibilities for navigation that render market boundaries porous. Taken together, such practices co-constitute the *Rue du Liban* fripe market in a continuous tension between consolidation and movement, with on-going processes of *fripisation* ensuring the market's continued functioning as site of valuation work.

Consolidating the marketplace: performances of boundary-making

Through routinised practices and on the basis of mostly-tacit agreements and calculations, different fripe traders partake in defining, patrolling and enforcing intangible market boundaries in *Rue du Liban*, often on a day-to-day basis. Especially in light of the fripe market's success and the increased pressure on space and congestion this has entailed, such practices of boundary-making are central to preserving consolidated patterns of spatial occupation, as well as the market's character as specialised fripe trading space. Both factors in turn guarantee the synchronised mechanisms of circulation that enable valuation work in *Rue du Liban,* turning continuous boundary-making into a prerequisite for the market's functioning.

As proprietor of his own fripe boutique and pioneer fripe trader, Kamel occupies a prominent position at the heart of the now-thriving market and often assumes an informal leadership role amongst the shopkeepers of *Rue du Liban*. For instance, he entertains close relations to local officials of the district and municipality who frequent the market for tax collection and handles relations to local police agents, negotiating what he refers to as "*doukhul al-souk"* (market entry), an intangible line at the Northern end of *Rue du Liban.* Kamel explains: "You see the vegetable stalls up there at the intersection? This is where the fripe market ends, if it extends any further, we are in trouble with *al-hakim* (the state/police)". While Kamel collaborates with *nassaba* on a day-to-day basis for resale, he also intervenes to limit the entry of street vendors into *Rue du Liban*. "To make the market work down here", he points up and down the densely occupied middle section of *Rue du Liban*, "we need to limit entry over there, otherwise everything will be blocked". With the growing popularity of the market street, congestion and disputed rules of entry have multiplied quarrels with mobile vendors, but also amongst shopkeepers. Kamel often mediates such conflicts. On one of these occasions, he asks shopkeepers to gather in front of his shop after closing hours. The plastic chairs he sets up for the gathering remain unused as the vendors' discussions unfold standing, with wild gestures and elevated voices. Some shopkeepers are accused of exacerbating congestion and endangering the reputation of the market by hiring mobile *nassaba* with *"berwitas"* (handcarts), allowing them to occupy the interstices between existing shops and stalls to maximise their profits. After lengthy negotiations, the traders agree on respecting an invisible "*khatt"* (line) that limits the entry of mobile vendors. Besides reducing congestion, Kamel hopes this will keep out "*nassaba* that are "*mush moutrabiin"* (not well behaved) as he fears that, "their language and manners scare away our best clients (…), and the low quality of the (fripe) merchandise they sell can ruin our reputation."

In differentiation to Kamel, Bilel neither owns nor formally rents any permanent trading space. Instead, he occupies a stall space adjacent to the wall of the parking lot at the Southern end of *Rue du Liban*. Based on a stable resale agreement with the fripe shop located opposite, Bilel has marked his vending position with a capital B in blue paint on the wall where he sets up the iron structure of his roofed stall. Bilel's reliability and exceptional wit as *nassab* have earned him a reputation amongst shopkeepers and other *nassaba*. Bilel explains that his positioning "*fil-kiass"* (in the street) means that he is forced to constantly negotiate occupations with other traders, in differentiation from "*tujar l-hawanet"* (shop

traders) who possess permanent, indoor vending spaces. Indeed, Bilel spends an important part of his working day preventing encroachments into the main market street, especially by vendors trading "*chinwa"* (made-in-China commodities) or other non-fripe products. As his stall is positioned close to the intersection with *Avenue de Madrid*, which marks the intangible boundary between "*souk al-fripe"* (the fripe market) and the more heterogeneous market landscape around the *Sidi Bahri* market*,* Bilel highlights his central role in affirming the identity of *Rue du Liban* as an exclusive fripe market. "Our reputation is the fripe, so we need to avoid chaos", he insists. Pointing towards the fripe shops, he then adds that, "many of the shop owners don't even see how we (the *nassaba*) struggle all the time to protect the *souk,* if we weren't here, *Rue du Liban* would no longer be a fripe market".

One of the traders who works beyond the intangible market boundaries Kamel and Bilel monitor and keep in check is Mohamed, a skinny white-haired vendor offering a small selection of used clothes on two banana boxes. As Mohamed is not allowed entry into *Rue du Liban,* he trades around the corner in *Avenue de Lyon,* on the narrow sidewalk adjacent to the tram lines. Next to him, other traders set up improvised stalls on the sidewalk and their number fluctuates with the weather and weekday. Rather than *fripiers* or *nassaba,* Mohamed and those trading in *Avenue de Lyon* are typically referred to as "*zwawila"* (poor people) by the fripe traders of *Rue du Liban*. While many of them sell second-hand garments and shoes, they also trade in a diverse array of other used goods, such as kitchen utensils or electronics. Bilel dismissively describes these vendors' wares as leftovers or old household items that cannot be qualified as "*fripe"* – a term he and other fripe traders reserve for sorted merchandise bought in bales from wholesalers. The distinction between professional fripe traders and used-good vendors underpins the exclusion of Mohamed and other traders from the main market street, which in Bilel's and Kamel's eyes is a key prerequisite to protecting the fripe market's reputation. While Mohamed occupies a vending position right at the intersection with *Rue du Liban*, he considers himself "*barra al-souk"* (outside the market). Rather than contesting his position, Mohamed actively defends the invisible market boundary by disciplining other used good vendors to respect their vending positions along the tram tracks. He moreover uses his positioning to intervene whenever vehicles attempt to turn into the main market street. Even though traffic isn't formally banned from *Rue du Liban,* Mohammed appeals to the common sense of drivers to suggest alternative routes, thus protecting market transactions by avoiding congestion and the interruption of commuter flows. While Mohamed thus enforces boundaries from which he remains himself excluded, his proactive role as market-maker reinforces the legitimacy of his occupation, allowing him to navigate market boundaries more flexibly than most other peripheral traders.

The three traders portrayed here actively invest in boundary-making as part of their market routines, underlining the labour-intensive processes of space-making required to preserve the market's mechanisms of coordinated circulation that function as a basis for valuation work. The market boundaries of *Rue du Liban* thus reflect "the stabilization of particular forms of organization of market relations" (Callon 1998: 48), here first and foremost the consolidation of particular patterns of spatial occupation and social cooperation. The positioning of different traders within the "patterned social order" (Bestor 2004: 15) of the fripe market determines how traders relate to, interpret or contest market boundaries, and how they experience these boundaries as differentiated effects of inclusion and exclusion. The active participation in boundary-making – even for those who trade beyond the marketplace's spatial confines – thereby often functions as a performative act of legitimising one's belonging to the market, here denoting the complex web of relations that enacts *Rue du Liban* as an exclusive fripe market.

Figure IV.6 Resellers work along the tramlines beyond the fripe market's boundaries (2018)

Transgressing or negotiating porous market boundaries

While enforcing boundaries is thus crucial to stabilising consolidated working mechanisms in the market, the need to sustain a rapid pace of fripe circulation simultaneously requires market-making practices that either transgress, or render porous, market boundaries. Indeed, the calculative agencies of different fripe traders in *Rue du Liban* testify to the centrality of periodically overstepping market boundaries – both in a physical and figurative sense – to avoid a slowdown of circulations and thus transactions in the market. First, following the *nassab* Bilel shows how movement beyond the market's spatial confines flexibly expands market relationalities outward, integrating the market into broader mechanisms of exchange and resulting in shifting densities and spatial proliferation. Second, honing in on the ways in which the peripheral trader Mohamed – who remains nominally positioned outside the market – negotiates access to, and participation in the *Rue du Liban* fripe market underlines the selective porosity of market boundaries. As this section demonstrates, market boundaries rendered porous through relational webs extending beyond the confined market are central to *Rue du Liban's* enactment as a site for fripe valuation: continuous relations of fripe supply and distribution beyond market boundaries uphold the market's rapid pace of turnover and high volume of transactions, avoiding the fripe's devaluation within the marketplace.

Apart from short cigarette or tea breaks, Bilel remains in constant movement throughout his working routines. His dense webs of relations and physical movement beyond the confined space of the market street are in fact central to explaining Bilel's exemplary success as *nassab*. In addition to his eccentric vending performances, it is Bilel's high-quality merchandise that sets him apart from competitors in *Rue du Liban.* Nominally, Bilel's vending position relies on a resale agreement with the opposite shop space, as is the case for most other *nassaba.* In reality however, Bilel receives most of his high-end fripe supplies from exclusive fripe boutiques in the surrounding *Lafayette* neighbourhood. After market

closing hours, Bilel thus often visits different boutique owners, such as Nessima[134], who opened a small fripe boutique in *Avenue de Londres* two years ago to provide for herself and her son after her divorce. Nessima and the much younger Bilel share sweet mint tea and cigarettes on small stools in front of the shop in the evening, chatting about wholesale prices and the latest gossip in the market. Bilel first met Nessima when he toured fripe shops in *Lafayette*, offering to buy unsold merchandise at bulk prices from boutique owners. Nessima had just entered the fripe business at the time, "with no experience in commerce at all", as she admits chucklingly. Struggling in the male-dominated fripe wholesale business that is characterised by tacit insider knowledge, Nessima struck a deal with Bilel, asking him to help with purchases in *Zahrouni* in exchange for receiving fixed quantities of her exclusive fripe women's wear for resale.

Trading himself exclusively with *crème* fripe products, Bilel in turn delegates the resale of the merchandise he takes over from the *Rue du Liban* shop space to other *nassaba*. He thus recruited family members and friends from his *houma* in *Ettadhamen*, a working-class neighbourhood on the North-Western periphery of Tunis, to resell the fripe on *berwitas* in the interstices or on the outskirts of the *Rue du Liban* market. As Bilel supplies the mobile vendors with merchandise, negotiates access to the marketplace on their behalf and organises storage spaces for their *berwitas* overnight, he assumes the role of an informal employer and obtains profit shares in return. Bilel's day-to-day cooperation with fluctuating numbers of mobile vendors often triggers conflict with the police and other market traders, especially the shopkeepers, who blame handcart vendors for obstructing customer traffic and ruining the reputation of the market street. Bilel, on the contrary, stresses the crucial role of mobile vendors in accelerating turnover and in keeping *Rue du Liban* attractive as a market: "To sell quickly and at cheap prices, the *berwita* vendors move with the commuters, (…) they adapt and go where the movement is". As Bilel himself cannot vacate his position at the centre of the market for long, he relies on the extended radius of movement of mobile vendors to ensure the rapid resale of large quantities of fripe merchandise. Since the narrow main section of *Rue du Liban* has become increasingly congested, Bilel explains that many commuters intentionally bypass the busy main market street, necessitating a repositioning of vendors with *berwitas* at the intersections in order to capture the re-routed pedestrian flows.

Bilel's modest vending stall in *Rue du Liban* therefore represents the nodal point of a complex web of fripe circulations that depend on his capacity to forge relationships of supply and resale beyond market boundaries. The mechanisms by which he expands the market relationally have both consolidating and proliferating effects on the physical marketplace: on the one hand, Bilel's networks contribute to the upholding of the bi-weekly rhythms of bale opening in *Rue du Liban* because he ensures the rapid resale of leftovers and thus enables the renewal of merchandise. On the other hand, Bilel's resale agreements channel movement towards or beyond the negotiated confines of the market, resulting in shifting market densities and market proliferation.

[134] Appendix II., Interlocutor 14;

Figure IV.7 Handcarts and plastic crates are used by the *nassaba* to extend market boundaries (2019)

Meanwhile, shadowing the market routines of the peripheral used-good trader Mohamed provides a different perspective on the porosity of market boundaries. While he remains nominally 'outside the fripe market', he negotiates access to the market and participates in its diverse exchange relations. He is one out of many largely invisible market participants who navigate boundaries flexibly, on the basis of mutually beneficial exchange agreements with shopkeepers and *nassaba*. Foundational to Mohamed's market participation is the uncertain commodity status and rapid devaluation of fripe merchandise. As a variable percentage of purchased fripe merchandise fails to qualify for market exchange, different mechanisms for reuse and recycling as well as strategies for cost-efficient removal are crucial to prevent the cluttering of fripe boutiques and an accumulation of textile waste in *Rue du Liban*, both of which would damage the market's reputation.

Mohamed thus regularly collects damaged or worn-out fripe garments in the market, particularly on Friday mornings, when traders like Kamel empty their shops before the Saturday bale opening. While Kamel professes to give to poor people like Mohamed out of religious duty[135], their exchanges in fact point to a more utilitarian form of "gift exchange" (Mauss 1966). In return for some wearable garments, Mohamed organises waste disposal free of charge, transporting large quantities of textile cast-offs out of the market on a shopping trolley. Using a backstreet staircase to sort the materials, Mohamed screens out wearable items that he either sells on his own improvised stall, or distributes to other peripheral vendors. He then hands over damaged or worn-out clothes to female *farazet* (sorters), who come to the fripe markets specifically to forage for leftovers that they can repair or process. While few of the exchange relations Mohamed entertains result in monetary transactions, they translate into "exchanges in modalities of sociability" (Elyachar 2005: 125) that establish Mohamed as a market participant with a central role in the redistribution of leftover merchandise and guarantee his prominent vending position

[135] *"Zakat"* is the religious obligation to provide a fixed proportion of one's earnings to the poor in Islam;

at the central intersection of *Rue du Liban*. As other ethnographic accounts of work in urban marketplaces have demonstrated, people often "invoke an idea of the market as a common resource or institution capable of providing for all those that live and work there" (Monteith 2018: 7). While Mohamed is clearly positioned at the lower end of the strict social hierarchies that determine opportunities for valuation work in *Rue du Liban*, his role and responsibility in the collective enactment of the market street grant access to the fripe market as a 'shared resource'. Not only Mohamed, but also multiple other relatively invisible market participants – who often do not partake in market exchanges in a monetary sense – thus play a role in upholding the fripe market's circulatory mechanisms by navigating porous market boundaries.

In addition to Bilel's and Mohamed's routinised practices of boundary transgression in *Rue du Liban*, the selective negotiation of porous market boundaries also implies the strategic opening of channels for market participation to various 'outsiders'. As different fripe traders recount, *Rue du Liban's* growing popularity and status as a preeminent site for fripe valuation – and thus profit-making – resulted in the emergence of resentment and jealousy, and thus attempts to either participate in, or thwart, valuation work in the market street. As a local resident who depends on the contested terrain of *Rue du Liban* for both his income and private life, Kamel is thus particularly aware of the need to balance short-term profit maximising strategies with investments in lasting political and social alliances. First, he recounts mounting anger amongst local residents who suffer from noise, accumulating waste, and staircases being repurposed as fripe storages. In addition to the disturbances, many feel unjustly excluded from the flourishing fripe business enveloping their neighbourhood, and some have thus started to mobilise against the market, lobbying the municipality to intervene through market clearance. Second, the precarious positioning of much of the *Rue du Liban* market in the open street requires continuous negotiations with local state officials and the police, who exert ever-higher profit shares from the burgeoning market. Kamel thus frequently intervenes to mediate between local residents, diverse state agents and other fripe traders, often solving conflict by opening new avenues for participation in valuation work. In his own shop space, Kamel moreover entertains hybrid exchange agreements that remain incommensurable as pure 'market transactions' because they are comprised of "a mix of market and non-market logics, values and practices" (Berndt et al. 2020: 16). From diverse formal and informal tax payments to temporary employment creation for local residents and the provision of high-end merchandise to neighbours; many of Kamel's exchange practices are devised to sustain the porosity of market boundaries, protecting market transactions in *Rue du Liban* in the long run.

This exploration of the diverse calculations underpinning strategic processes of boundary-making and boundary transgression in *Rue du Liban* demonstrates how the fripe market is co-produced in a tension between spatial consolidation and periodic adaptation or proliferation. The market's confinement "to a symbolic and geographic territory" (Gago 2017: 68) provides a crucial basis for collective valuation work with diverse fripe materials. Protecting and enforcing market boundaries is thus indispensable to preserving both the consolidated patterns of socio-spatial order that underpin the street's synchronised circulatory mechanisms, and the overall "vending location that has become synonymous to the commodities" (Milgram 2012: 207) – here the fripe – over time. Yet, the market's continuous "proliferating dynamic" (Gago 2017: 68) is also crucial to maintaining the rapid turnover cycles of merchandise that set the *Rue du Liban* market apart from other fripe markets in central Tunis. The continuous transgression, or negotiated porosity of market boundaries is generative of "structures of prolonged entanglement" (Mörtenböck and Mooshammer 2008: 357) that imbricate the fripe market in an expansive set of provisioning and exchange relations, blurring physical delimitations of the marketplace and undermining clear-cut distinctions between market participants and outsiders.

Taken together, such routinised practices of boundary-making and boundary transgression co-constitute the fripe market as a socio-spatial entity that remains in-the-making. While *Rue du Liban* has thus today become consolidated as a densely occupied market street and has gained a city-wide reputation for its exclusive fripe offer, it nevertheless remains in-motion, as densities periodically shift outwards, and as market boundaries are renegotiated or redrawn. Ethnographic insight into market-making as an intricate and on-going spatial practice helps overcome the false dichotomy between marketplaces as either static or kinetic spatial forms. While the term *fripisation* is often employed to capture a sense of ephemeral market proliferation in *Rue du Liban,* close-up investigation instead reveals how market forms evolve as a result of highly specific market processes. Rather than "matters of spontaneous flows", the socio-spatial ordering patterns of the fripe market reflect specific "connections, interdependencies and autonomies persons conceive and operationalise with each other" (Simone 2018: 9). Nevertheless, as the next part discusses, the distinct 'market forms' of the fripe market remain invisible or illegible to most market outsiders, including those responsible for governing urban marketplaces.

Figure IV.8 Mohamed uses a shopping trolley to transport leftover garments to his sorting location (2019)

2. *Fripisation* as a problem of urban governance

When local residents or the owners of the remaining patisserie and grocery shop in *Rue du Liban* evoke the term *fripisation,* they often do so not to describe a concluded transformation process but rather on-going changes reshaping their immediate surroundings. To outsiders, the dominant impression the fripe market gives is one of uncontrolled sprawl, with fripe trading gradually enveloping ever-greater parts of the *Lafayette* neighbourhood. Such unfolding change processes are often understood within the context of a post-revolutionary conjuncture, in which local media outlets and citizens' initiatives cast the unchecked proliferation of trading activities in central Tunis as an emblem of weakening urban governance (Brown et al. 2017). Consequently, sites of *fripisation* – and especially those located in the

heart of the capital, like *Rue du Liban* – were increasingly framed as 'problem spaces', requiring state intervention to halt processes of urban degradation and to reimpose law and order. While diverse local state actors and members of the security forces were thus routinely involved in co-producing processes of *fripisation* in *Rue du Liban,* the Tunis governorate eventually singled out the bustling fripe market as the target of a top-down clearance and relocation campaign in 2017.

To explain how *fripisation* has become a selective target of repressive government in present-day Tunis, the second part of this chapter relates historical legacies of governing urban marketplaces and the fripe's historical constitution as a contested form of market order to the contemporary clearance and relocation campaign in *Rue du Liban*. The next section examines the dichotomy between *souk* and *marché* that originated during the colonial era and underpins the enduring stigmatisation of unenclosed marketplaces in present-day Tunis. The subsequent section details the fripe trade's systematic exclusion from planned marketplaces and its development as a hybrid market landscape, explaining how this has positioned the fripe as an unwanted agent of urban change. The final section then returns to *Rue du Liban* to investigate how the 2017 attempt of forced market relocation upset the socio-spatial ordering patterns that underpin collective valuation work in the fripe market.

a. Governing marketplaces in Tunis: the dualism between *souk* and *marché*

Colonial policies in diverse contexts sought to impose economic and political control over marketplaces by imposing static, spatial confines and mechanisms of enclosure. In colonial India for example, perceptions of the "bazaar as paradigmatic open space" that "is not subject to a single set of enclosing rules" triggered acute political fears (Chakrabarty 1991: 22, 25). Similarly, in colonial Egypt, "urban market streets" were seen "as lines of penetration from outside the city" that undid "separations between inside and outside" (Mitchell 1988: 56), allowing inherently uncontrollable populations such as street vendors – described as "pests" by the colonial authorities – to infiltrate the inner city of Cairo (Kuppinger 1995: 75). Colonial authorities in different contexts thus sought to enforce "legible urban structures" and "fixed urban forms" on marketplaces (ibid: 58), often through built enclosures that were then governed by strict hygiene regulations (Monteith 2019; Sundaram 2009). As a direct consequence, pre-existing forms of urban commerce that were organised outside the newly created enclosures were criminalised under anti-vagrancy or anti-loitering laws, prohibiting for instance the occupation of public space for hawking (Morange 2015: 252) or outlawing vendors' cries in the city (Sharma 2021: 25).

In colonial Tunisia, the *souk* was equally perceived as a transgressive and ungovernable site, as it represented a central rural-urban interface that brought together diverse flows of merchandise, people and information, and thus established linkages between disparate spaces and people (Jemmali 1972: 30). Indeed, the Arabic term "*souk"* is derived from the verb "to go towards" or "drive", thus testifying to the emblematic role of markets as radiating centres of movement that often became the basis for new settlements[136] (Chérif 2006: 431). Attempts to ordain fixed spatial parameters for marketplaces were initiated under Ottoman modernisation reforms in the late-19th century and were subsequently expanded and systematised by the French colonial authorities (Meddeb 2012: 97, 98). The result of policies of market enclosure and regulation was the emergence of opposing urban market forms, captured in a new lexical differentiation between *souk* and *marché* that persists until the present day. Over time, this dichotomy came to describe separate categories of governing, underpinned by normative distinctions

[136] This origin story is reflected in the names of many Tunisian cities, for instance "*Souk El Arbaa"* (lit. "Wednesday market"), the former name of the present-day city Jendouba in Tunisia's North-West;

between backward and modern, and unplanned and planned marketplaces, that continue to stigmatise unenclosed and proliferating market forms in Tunis.

Systematic attempts to govern *souks* in Tunisia by regulating their spatial parameters began with the "*tanzimat"* modernisation reforms under Ottoman rule in Tunisia. In 1840, a Beylical decree expanded control over weekly *souks*, regulating market times and their spatial confines to facilitate tax collection (Chérif 2006: 431). Meanwhile, the authorities had invested in an expansion of the covered "*aswak"* in the capital city, a "network of highly specialized markets*"* that were governed as semi-public spaces by different guilds from the 17th and 18th century onwards (Ferjani 2017: 44, 68). A newly created municipal council, or "*majlis",* became responsible for inspecting and taxing all urban marketplaces from 1858 onwards (Lafi 2005: 234). With the increasing regulation of urban marketplaces in Tunis, pre-existing forms of "petty commerce, hawking and door-to-door sales", practised particularly by poor European migrants from Malta and Southern Italy, were criminalised and prosecuted, with the "*dabtiya"* (urban police) regularly arresting vendors and clearing streets and sidewalks (Clancy-Smith 2012: 133, 135,137).

French colonial rule then further enhanced control over marketplaces through a systematic policy of forced enclosure. In rural areas, the temporal and spatial regulation of weekly *souks* became a tool for controlling and sedentarising nomadic or semi-nomadic populations (Bennafla 1999: 30; Meddeb 2012: 98). Meanwhile, in the capital city, the colonial authorities incorporated the construction of urban marketplaces – modelled after French covered market infrastructures and thus denominated *marchés* – into their project of European city-building. Mirroring a "colonial urban order that was segregationist and dualist by definition" (Belhedi 2005: 4), the Tunis medina and its *faubourgs* with sprawling, open-air *souks* were now juxtaposed to the newly planned European districts that featured enclosed *marchés*. The new central market of Tunis, completed in 1891, became the epitome of the 'modern market', complete with an office for sanitary control and tax inspection responsible for oversight of all municipal markets (Ben Yedder 2016). The model of the *marché* was subsequently replicated across the European districts and new decrees formalising health and safety regulations for fresh food markets in 1904 legitimised the forced enclosure of the remaining open-air *souks* in the city centre[137]. In addition to the juxtaposed market forms of *souk* and *marché* – which mirrored a broader system of "differential regulations" for European and native districts under French colonial rule (Abu-Lughod 1980: 187) – trading "in the public domain" of the city was now outlawed, unless explicitly authorised and taxed by the municipality[138]. Accordingly, legal provisions formalised in 1884 banned "*colportage"* (hawking) from all public spaces [139] and streets were now regulated as mono-functional spaces for mobility (Ferjani 2017: 98, 99).

The juxtaposition between *souk* and *marché* outlasted independence, with urban modernisation efforts in the capital initiating a process of "*dé-soukalisation"* that aimed to eradicate sprawling, open-air market forms (Belhedi 2005: 7; Berry-Chikhaoui 1994: 237). For this purpose, the colonial-era model of the covered municipal *marché* was upheld and expanded further, both in new urban areas of Tunis and through the forced enclosure of remaining open-air marketplaces in the inner city. At the same time, weekly *souks* in the capital city were now framed by the authorities as "archaic forms of trade lacking spatial order" that are "unable to contribute to economic progress" (Jemmali 1986: 31). This led to attempts to, first, completely prohibit, and then, severely restrict the parameters of weekly *souks* on the

[137]Appendix III., Source 11;
[138]Appendix III., Source 12;
[139] Anti-loitering laws were passed by the French colonial authorities in 1895, as part of broader regulation pertaining to public space;

capital's peripheries (ibid). However, urban policies of *dé-soukalisation* had limited success on the ground. Policies to outlaw or restrict weekly, open-air *souks* for fresh produce were shelved as they triggered widespread resistance from traders, local residents and the municipalities, whose tax revenues depended on the markets (ibid: 25). With accelerating urban sprawl and the emergence of peri-urban neighbourhoods that lacked any commercial offer, weekly *souks* even gained in importance in the capital during the 1970s (Miossec 1985). In addition, relocation projects to covered *marchés* often remained incomplete, and the market infrastructures frequently remained underutilised – as had been the case under the colonial authorities[140] – because traders considered open-air vending a key competitive advantage and refused to pay occupancy taxes.

Beyond the normative governmental categories of *souk* and *marché,* diverse new, hybrid market forms developed in the capital city, posing new challenges for governing urban marketplaces. As most planned commercial infrastructures, particularly supermarkets and the first shopping malls created from the 1980s onwards, remained targeted towards the upwardly-mobile middle-classes (Miossec 1990), markets trading with "*silaa kontra"* or "*mrahba"* (counterfeit/smuggled merchandise) or "*hajat mustamla"* (second-hand things) came to supply ever-larger numbers of urban dwellers who remained excluded from 'formal' consumption spaces (Lafi 2017). For instance, *Nahj Zarkoun* in the *medina* turned into an emblematic space for suitcase trade with European consumer goods[141]; the former warehouse quarter of *Moncef Bey* came to host a market specialised in smuggled electronics; and the shores of the "*sabkha"* (salt lake) *Sijoumi* became the site of a giant used car and spare part market. Escalating socio-spatial segregation in the capital (Belhedi 2005: 4) thus became visible in urban market landscapes, with proliferating, unplanned markets – often framed as "*mawazi"* (informal/parallel) – catering to the urban majority. Two such market forms assumed particular prominence and came to transform urban market landscapes: first, the so-called "*souk Libya",* specialised in the trade with smuggled "*chinwa"* (made-in-China) commodities, that proliferated as a result of the flourishing cross-border trade between Libya and Tunisia from 1987 onwards (Boubakri, 2001; Doron, 2015; Meddeb 2012)[142]. Second, *al-fripe,* which developed into a ubiquitous urban market form and highly differentiated urban trading landscape. As the next section demonstrates, fripe trading was never accommodated in official marketplaces and thus had to develop its own, hybrid market landscape, blurring ideal-type distinctions between *souk* and *marché* and producing new market forms in-process, like that of *Rue du Liban*.

b. The fripe as hybrid market landscape and unwanted factor of urban change

In many African and Arab cities, second-hand retail landscapes are confined to a single, central marketplace, with wholesalers and retailers often operating as part of the same spatial cluster (Hansen 2000(a); Rosenfeld 2019; Valenciano-Mané 2019)[143]. In Tunis, on the contrary, fripe trading has developed into a highly differentiated and specialised "urban retail landscape" (Findlay et al. 1990), with innumerable boutiques, chain stores, permanent and temporary markets, and mobile traders catering to a diverse clientele and specialising in distinct product categories or price and quality segments. As a partially consolidated and highly complex retail landscape, the fripe can thus not be

[140] Appendix III., Source 13;

[141] The suitcase trade between France and North Africa is discussed at length in Peraldi (2002), and the role of Tunisian migrants in suitcase trading from France and Italy is most recently analysed in Mandhouj (2018);

[142] While these markets continue to be denominated *souk Libya* in Tunis today, a lot of the *chinwa* merchandise is now smuggled across the Tunisian-Algerian border, especially since the outbreak of war in Libya, see Saadaoui (2018);

[143] In Cairo – in the *Al-Wakalah* market – and Beirut – in *Souk Al-Ahad* –, a single marketplace assumes central wholesale and retail, as well as redistribution functions in the city;

subsumed under categories such as "informal urban commerce" or "street vending", frequently employed to describe market landscapes in African cities (e.g. Nagati and Stryker 2016; Spire and Choplin 2017; Racaud et al. 2018; Young 2017). Rather, the contemporary fripe trade draws attention to interrelated retail landscapes at the urban scale and to distinct, historically constituted market forms. It thus mirrors other types of commerce that have lastingly transformed urban market landscapes and have produced their own market forms, without ever being officially accommodated in planned commercial infrastructures. In the North African context, the most prominently researched example is the trade in made-in-China commodities, which has reshaped wholesale and retail markets and has triggered the emergence of entirely new commercial districts in Egyptian, Moroccan, Algerian and Tunisian cities over the past three decades (Bennafla 2015; Bouhali 2018; Doron 2018; Gherbi et al. 2016). Building on this literature, the following section examines how the fripe trade in Tunis developed from an itinerant trade into a ubiquitous urban market landscape, and thereby emerged as a prominent, yet often unwanted, factor of urban change.

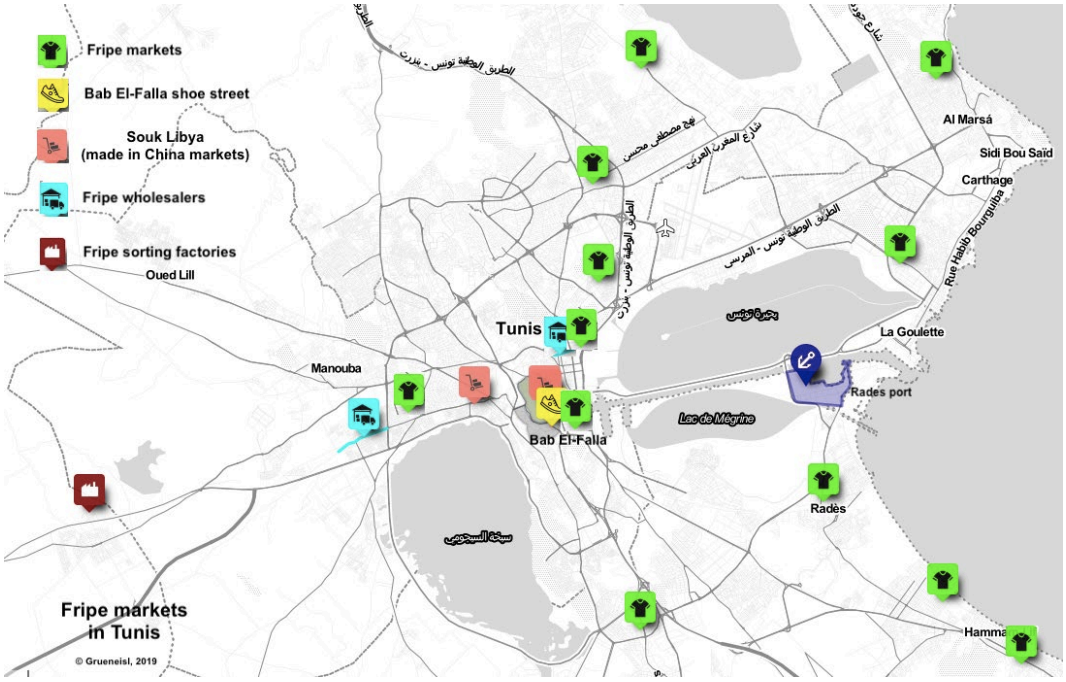

Figure IV.9 The most important fripe marketplaces in central Tunis

In pre-colonial and colonial-era Tunis, both the collection and resale of "*ruba fikia*" (second-hand clothes) were organised as itinerant trade, and used clothes traders were thus described as a nuisance by the colonial authorities in the early 20th century (Liauzu 1976: 615). After independence, trade in imported fripe from the United States gradually replaced bartering and resale of *ruba fikia.* As fripe trading remained excluded from both covered municipal *marchés* in the inner-city and weekly *souks* on the urban peripheries, the absence of permanent trading spaces soon became a problem for the rapidly growing number of fripe traders in Tunis. This led to the auto-construction of marketplaces, most prominently in the *Hafsia* during the 1960s, and in *Ibn Khaldoun* during the 1970s (as discussed in Chapter II). In addition to such specialised *souk Kennedy,* fripe traders soon occupied the fringes of most inner-city *marchés,* and came to appropriate ever-larger trading areas in the weekly *souks* of Tunis (Jemmali 1986: 47, 135). By the early 1970s, fripe traders already accounted for over 30% of the overall number of traders in weekly *souks* on the capital's peripheries (Miossec 1985: 51). While such processes of appropriation at times triggered conflicts with "*al-baladiya"* (the municipality), local officials also rapidly entered pragmatic agreements with the fripe traders, levying ad hoc taxes per trader-occupied

square metre on market days and thus gradually normalising and consolidating the fripe traders' presence (ibid: 133).

The watershed moment of 1995 (discussed in Chapter I), when legal reform translated into a profound restructuring of "*quitaa al-fripe"* (the fripe sector), then resulted in another rapid expansion and differentiation of fripe retail landscapes in Tunis. An overall surge in fripe imports from the late 1990s onwards spurred on the domestic fripe trade, and the centralisation of fripe sorting in factories resulted in an unprecedented differentiation of fripe merchandise into value and product categories. Increased competition amongst traders and the availability of neatly graded product types encouraged specialisation, triggering the emergence of fripe boutiques and marketplaces offering either exclusively "*fripe de luxe"* (luxury fripe) or specific product types, such as shoes, accessories or sportswear. With high-end fripe merchandise available at prices that would have been unthinkable in the fripe a decade earlier, it became crucial to attract an upper-middle and middle-class clientele to the fripe markets. Consequently, new, exclusive fripe markets emerged in wealthy residential areas, for instance in *Menzah VIII*, where fripe traders gradually took over the municipal *marché* in the early 2000s. As the covered market infrastructure – originally designed as a fresh food market – had been chronically under-utilised, the municipality agreed to the change in occupancy, benefitting from increased tax revenues. Ever since, the *marché* has functioned as a high-end fripe market, complete with a parking lot and specialised boutiques with changing cabins, catering to those in search of original brand items and rare designer cuts.

Figure IV.10 Only high-end fripe merchandise is on sale in the *Menzah VIII* market (2019)

By the late 2000s, the fripe trade had thus morphed into a ubiquitous form of urban commerce that spanned hybrid market landscapes in the capital, blurring dichotomies between *souk* and *marché*. Indeed, fripe trading had moved into diverse existing marketplaces – from municipal *marchés* to weekly *souks* and historic open-air markets in the inner-city – at times transforming them into specialised fripe

markets over time. In addition, fripe trading created its own distinct retail landscapes in Tunis: in some cases, clusters of formal boutique spaces in peripheral neighbourhoods like *El-Aouina* formed new commercial centralities that transformed neighbourhood dynamics. In other cases, processes of auto-construction or appropriations of public space allowed for establishing market extensions or entirely new trading spaces. While some fripe marketplaces had thus become highly consolidated, others remained in-the-making, triggering processes of proliferation and shifting commercial densities that frequently violated official planning regulations or infringed upon public space or property. This turned the fripe into a prominent, yet often-contested, agent of urban change, triggering conflict, but also establishing diverse, mutually beneficial settlements between fripe traders, public authorities and the security forces.

Change processes in urban fripe trading landscapes accelerated in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution. First, an unchecked increase in fripe imports spurred on the proliferation of fripe trading. Second, a temporary weakening of public oversight in the period of political upheaval following the revolution allowed for unprecedented levels of informal building activities in the capital (Kahloun 2014: 15). The unauthorised expansion and auto-construction of fripe marketplaces thus conferred new prominence to the term *fripisation* in post-2011 Tunis, capturing the fripe's tangible role in transforming urban space across the capital. From handcart vendors in central city squares, to sprawling fripe markets in peri-urban areas and newly consolidated market streets like *Rue du Liban,* the fripe trade often expanded on appropriated municipal land or in public space, multiplying conflicts with the local state and the police. Mirroring post-independence attempts to contain "*soukalisation"*, *fripisation* thus became increasingly defined as a 'problem' of urban governance in post-2011 Tunis. While diverse state actors had in fact always co-produced *fripisation*, such processes were now increasingly framed as emblematic for 'state absence', translating into urgent calls for intervention to reign in deviant market forms and their seemingly unstoppable proliferation.

c. Halting *fripisation:* the attempted transformation of *Rue du Liban* into an 'orderly' market

Mounting public pressure on local authorities to curb processes of *fripisation* – particularly in the central city – eventually resulted in a series of forced market clearances and relocation campaigns in post-2011 Tunis, one of which explicitly targeted the *Rue du Liban* fripe market in December 2017. The "*hamla"* (campaign) was initiated single-handedly by the then-governor of Tunis Omar Mansour and relied on external police units, thus taking by surprise the employees of the district and municipal administration, as well as the local police agents, who had extracted profit shares from the fripe market for over a decade. The following discussion of the clearance campaign thus illustrates how "state practices can become illegible" even "within institutions of the state" (Das 2004: 234), showing how the initially uninformed Municipal Market Authority[144] was charged with executing the governorate's plan to relocate the displaced *nassaba* to an adjacent parking lot.

The planned relocation of the sprawling *Rue du Liban* fripe market to an enclosed and 'orderly' marketplace was once again underpinned by the fictitious dichotomy between kinetic and static market forms, or *souks* and *marchés*, that has dominated legacies of governing urban marketplaces in Tunis. As has been the case with attempts to forcibly displace and reorder marketplaces in diverse urban contexts (Milgram 2015; Spire and Choplin 2017; Racaud et al. 2018), the relocation of the *Rue du Liban* fripe market failed and the market soon returned to its original set-up in the street. However, this

[144] *Direction des Marchés Municipaux,* referred to as "market authority" in the following;

chapter returns to this particular incident because it aptly demonstrates the impossibility of abstracting market forms – in this case through the imposition of a formal market order – from the highly specific market processes analysed in the first part of this chapter.

Clearing the street, enclosing the market

As was the case in other Tunis marketplaces, the police clearance of the *Rue du Liban* fripe market in October 2017 occurred without prior warning, taking not only the fripe traders by surprise, but also local police agents and employees of the municipality[145] who remained uninformed of the campaign. Many of the *nassaba* in *Rue du Liban* thus saw their merchandise confiscated and stall spaces destroyed by the police, and only few of them succeeded in saving their belongings by storing them in the boutique spaces on the opposite roadside. The permanent stationing of police forces in *Rue du Liban* in the aftermath of the campaign precluded a return of the *nassaba* to the street, upending the mechanism of synchronised, two-fold circulation that had underpinned the rapid pace of turnover in the market street. In the two months that passed between the violent clearance and the opening of the market relocation site on the adjacent parking lot in December 2017, the *Rue du Liban* fripe market thus came to a standstill, with most *nassaba* relocating elsewhere and shopkeepers complaining about lost profits and the inability to pay for rent or purchase new fripe bales from wholesalers. While the governorate's *hamla* thus exclusively targeted the *nassaba,* and was indeed intended to deflect the negative image of *fripisation* by clearing the street space, it in fact impacted all fripe traders and compromised *Rue du Liban's* functioning as a site for fripe valuation.

About a month after the clearance campaign, Mr. S.[146] sits in a worn-out leather chair in his office in the market authority, marking the five planned relocation sites designated by the governorate on a fold-out map of the Tunis city centre[147]. Four out of the five relocation sites are walled tarmacked spaces that were used as parking lots before, amongst them the site designated for the relocation of the *Rue du Liban* fripe market. Opening a folder stacked on a large pile of paper, Mr. S. flicks through the list of displaced *nassaba* registered for relocation. He explains: "The governor announced on television that over 1000 street vendors will receive new trading spaces in a "*souk mounatham"* (orderly market), but in reality the governorate never planned *"al-tafassil"* (the details), they simply delegated it to us". Not only Mr. S. shows himself disgruntled with "*hamlet al-wali"* (the governor's campaign), as the municipal employees sarcastically refer to the market clearance and relocation campaign, which in their eyes served primarily as a spectacular media performance to make the name of the new governor. As Mr. M.[148], the youngest of Mr. S.'s colleagues remarks over a cigarette on the office balcony, *"*it is easy to tidy up and earn praise for emptying the streets, but now we are left with the chaos".

In December 2017, when Mr. S. and Mr. M. open the parking lot adjacent to *Rue du Liban* as the relocation site, frustration therefore runs high amongst the fripe traders, who have lost two months of income as a result of the violent clearance. As the municipal employees explain the detailed relocation plans to the shopkeepers and the *nassaba* who have gathered around them, they face open resentment from the traders. Mr. S. repeatedly exclaims, "go and complain in the governorate" and explains angrily that the market authority was never consulted or involved in *al-hamla,* and is now simply executing the governorate's orders. In line with long-standing representations of the 'orderly marketplace' as a static and enclosed urban site, the relocation projects drawn up by the market authority all follow similar

[145] Appendix I, Interview 36;
[146] Appendix II., Interlocutor 15;
[147] Appendix I, Interview 37; for following engagements see Appendix II, Interlocutor 15;
[148] Appendix II., Interlocutor 15;

ordering principles: first, physical enclosures, in this case the concrete walls of the parking lot, guarantee the market's separation from the open street and preclude proliferation. Second, abstract ordering principles define the market's internal order, with homogenous vending plots and stall spaces arranged according to a grid-like structure. As Mr. S. and Mr. M. explain to the traders, a lottery system will ensure the fair attribution of the vending plots, numbered rectangles of equal size that have been painted in glistening white paint onto the tarmac. A model stall space has been erected by the market authority next to the parking lot's entrance gate and all those who are attributed a vending plot in the relocation site will be responsible for constructing a stall of the exact same measures and materials.

The relocation plan Mr. S. and Mr. M. presented to the fripe traders of *Rue du Liban* reflected a standardised, spatial exercise of planning on a blank slate. It was conceived by municipal employees unfamiliar with the working mechanisms or set-up of the diverse marketplaces for which these relocation schemes were intended. Consequently, such visions for market relocation remained indifferent to the ways in which distinct market forms are both a contingent outcome of, and constitutive to, specific processes of market-making. In *Rue du Liban,* it became rapidly apparent that the plans outlined by the market authority went contrary to the basic circulatory mechanisms that underpinned valuation work in the market street.

Figure IV.11 The model shop designed by the Municipal Market Authority for the relocation site (2017)

The static spatial 'market order' as a threat to valuation work

In February 2018, Mr. S. and Mr. M. return to *Rue du Liban* to inspect the relocation site after two consecutive nights of break-ins and vandalism in the 'new marketplace'. Leaning against the metal framework of a half-burnt stall structure, Mr. S. shows little surprise about the scale of destruction. Instead, he calmly explains: "This already happened in the other relocation sites (…), the traders are angry because of the clearance, residents are angry about losing their parking spaces and local

unemployed youth want a vending plot in the new marketplace.*"* Mr. M., who sits on an empty crate next to Mr. S. shrugs his shoulders resignedly: "we work in markets all the time, it is our job, so unlike the governorate, we know you can't simply move traders, and especially not the fripe". He points towards *Rue du Liban* and adds, "this is a market that works with and because of the street".

This conversation followed two months of open confrontation between the market authority and the fripe traders that had derailed the relocation project. Despite the shopkeepers' and *nassaba's* differentiated positioning in the market hierarchies of *Rue du Liban,* they rapidly agreed that the relocation project proposed by the municipality constituted a threat rather than an opportunity for the fripe market. Therefore, the *nassaba* refused to participate in the relocation scheme and – while no one openly admitted responsibility – the fripe traders likely hired or cooperated with the "*bandiya"* (thugs) who repeatedly vandalised the relocation site and attacked vendors attempting to relocate from elsewhere in the city. Faced with the collective refusal of the fripe traders and the damage in the relocation site, both Mr. S. and Mr. M. recognised the incompatibility of the static and homogenous market forms they had been asked to devise on behalf of the governorate with the complex working principles of the *Rue du Liban* fripe market. The attempted translation of an abstract spatial order into a concrete new market form thus revealed how the proposed relocation scheme endangered the market-making processes that co-constituted the 'street' as a specialised fripe market.

First, the project of market clearance treated the fripe shops and *nassaba* in *Rue du Liban* as separate entities, judging the latter as "*intissab al-fawdawi"* (lit. chaotic standing) – a pejorative term often used for street trading – that has to be eradicated to bring back 'order' to the street. While the *hamla* thus ostensibly intervened to clean up the chaos that had taken over a central Tunis street, the fripe traders on the contrary stressed how the governorate's campaign first upset and then threatened to lastingly dismantle the cooperative hierarchies that had governed the fripe marketplace for over a decade. In an impromptu gathering in front of Kamal's shop space about three weeks after the clearance, different fripe traders of *Rue du Liban* deplored the havoc created by the governorate's campaign, as it had upended the stable working agreements between shops and *nassaba* required to uphold a rapid pace of turnover of fripe merchandise in the market street. "They call our market *"fawdawi"* (chaotic)", one of the elderly traders exclaimed, "but *"al-hakim"* (the government) understands nothing about this market (…), they don't come to talk to us, as you see they simply destroy everything and they (are the ones who) leave chaos behind".

Second, plans to relocate the *nassaba* to the enclosed parking lot adjacent to *Rue du Liban* – and thus to separate them from the open street – undermined the traders' joint reliance on porous and periodically evolving market boundaries. While in the eyes of the governorate, the walled character of the new market site guaranteed its capacity to contain market proliferation, the traders considered the physical and visual delimitation from the open street as a key impediment to fripe valuation. The *nassaba's* removal "*min al-kiass"* (from the street) not only translated into a loss of *Rue du Liban's* characteristic market densities, it also deprived the *nassaba* of their key competitive advantage. As Bilel explained, "*kliounatna*" (our customers) in *Rue du Liban* are mainly commuters, they buy and look while walking, so it is our task to catch them *"bil-ithniya"* (on the way) and to make transactions fast as they don't have time". The market's separation from the street space would now strip the *nassaba* of their capacity to flexibly adapt to changing commuter movements and shifting densities. As Bilel put it, "we (*nassaba)* work to move things and people (…), our job is to get everything in the right place at the right time, so we don't sit still on a chair and wait for customers to come." In addition, the fripe traders feared that the need to 'enter' a walled enclosure – not observable from the open street – would translate into a drastic decrease in profits, as the fripe market would lose its vital commuter traffic. While the relocation

site thus offered permanent vending plots and stall spaces to all *nassaba,* including those whose trading spaces in *Rue du Liban* had often remained contested*,* the enclosed marketplace contradicted the very principles of the valuation work they performed with fripe merchandise.

Figure IV.12 Vendors' names are marked on their allocated relocation plots (2017)

Finally, the relocation plans outlined by the Market Authority threatened to undermine *Rue du Liban*'s status as a specialised fripe market. While Mr. S. and Mr. M. promised all *nassaba* displaced from *Rue du Liban* to be relocated in situ, the market relocation site opened in *Rue du Liban* was also destined to accommodate street vendors that had been displaced in similar clearance campaigns elsewhere in the city. According to the same lottery system devised for the *nassaba* of *Rue du Liban*, other traders were thus to be allocated vending plots on the former parking lot alongside the fripe traders. As both Kamel and Bilel emphasised, this arbitrary allocation system would ruin the hard-earned reputation of their fripe marketplace. "We worked day and night to build a fripe market, and people now come here for fripe", Kamel asserted, and then added, "we have a good clientele, professionals from the administration and offices in Lafayette, they wouldn't come here if it wasn't for the quality". Bilel asked indignantly, "how can I do my work when I have a *chinwa* vendor next to me from *Barcelone*[149]*?"*. In the eyes of both traders, losing *Rue du Liban* as a "symbolic location" (Gregson and Crewe 2003: 49) for the fripe trade risked reversing years of tiresome efforts to establish a specialised marketplace.

Similar government interventions to the one examined in *Rue du Liban* occur regularly in different fripe markets of the capital, with the questions of when and why a particular fripe market is singled out as a 'problem space' often remaining unanswered. Underlying such contemporary interventions is the fripe trade's long-standing positioning as a hybrid market form that transgresses governmental categories of *souk* and *marché* and resists fixity, because it remains in-the-making in diverse urban spaces.

[149] *"Barcelone*" refers to the central train station of Tunis, a hub for street trading affected by the 2017 clearance campaign;

Particularly in the post-revolutionary conjuncture, portrayals of *fripisation* as processes devoid of 'order' and beyond government control have turned spaces like *Rue du Liban* into priority sites for spectacular performances of urban governance. The emphasis of such interventions lies on 'clean-up' campaigns that rapidly free public space of illicit occupations or seemingly ephemeral market infrastructures, with little or no regard for the broader socio-spatial ordering patterns and market processes of which these frequently form an inherent part. As has been the case with forced market relocation campaigns in diverse cities of the MENA region since the 1990s – often informed and supported by international development agencies (Gertel 2009) – attempts to superimpose a static spatial order on complex economic processes has produced recurrent failures. The illegibility of, or deliberate disregard for, existing 'forms of order' underpinning the targets of such campaigns, leads to an interruption of market processes and thus often triggers mechanisms of resistance or circumvention (ibid: 389). In the case of the fripe therefore, the consecutive failure of similar efforts of market relocation have perpetuated, or even accelerated, processes of market proliferation, thus reinforcing portrayals of the fripe as allegedly 'ungovernable' urban market landscape.

Figure IV.13 The abandoned relocation site soon turned into the fripe market's waste sorting space (2018)

3. Conclusion

Almost exactly a year after the clearance campaign in *Rue du Liban,* Wassim sits with his morning coffee in front of the small shop space he rents at the bustling intersection of *Rue du Liban* and *Avenue de Madrid.* The market street has regained its buzz and is once again densely occupied by market stalls and display tables of the fripe shops that stretch far into the street space. Pensive, Wassim points at the activity in the street and remarks, "this is the "*circulation*" (traffic/movement) I was missing before; this is why I decided to come here*".* And after a while he adds, "you know, the fripe keeps moving and either you move with it, or it's over".

Tendencies to approach urban marketplaces as either stable spatial containers or ephemerally evolving kinetic forms have reinforced a fictitious dichotomy between planned and unplanned, or formal and informal marketplaces. This division has often precluded an explicit interrogation of the connections between market- and space-making that underpin the emergence of evolving market forms in the city. As this chapter has demonstrated, a close-up ethnographic engagement with the micro-level market-making practices of diverse traders provides insight into the fripe markets' constitution through a continuous tension between consolidation and movement, and thus as spatial entities that remain in-the-making or as sites of on-going *fripisation*. In the *Rue du Liban* market, newcomers like Wassim recount that it was only by joining the market's strictly coordinated circulatory mechanisms that they began to grasp the singular patterns of 'market order' that underpin what Wassim describes as an exceptional basis for valuation work, and what outsiders tend to perceive as mere "*fawda"* (chaos).

Such evolving forms of market order remain however illegible, or are deliberately disregarded, in the governance of urban marketplaces, and particularly of fripe markets in Tunis. Especially since the 2011 revolution, *fripisation* has thus become constituted as a problem of urban governance and prominent sites of proliferating fripe trading activities, like *Rue du Liban*, can hence turn into targets of violent clearance without prior notice. Such selective performances of state power are often combined with attempts to impose a static 'market order', or what has become legible as such through long-standing normative distinctions between the market forms of *souk* and *marché* in Tunis. As such static ordering principles remain decoupled from specific market processes, and indeed often run counter to the fripe trade's reliance on a continuous impetus for movement, state interventions frequently result in displacement and new efforts of market-making elsewhere, thus spurring on rather than inhibiting processes of *fripisation* in the city.

This chapter has examined the tensions between spatial consolidation and proliferation in the making of marketplaces that underpin contemporary processes of *fripisation.* It has demonstrated how diverse fripe traders collectively enact a particular Tunis street as a 'marketplace', emphasising how this process of space-making is a precondition to the valuation work they perform. *Fripisation* is thus examined as a process of localised transformation that results in the consolidation of specific socio-spatial ordering patterns, but is also contingent on complex circulatory mechanisms that link it to other sites, actors and processes across the city. Together, this produces the synchronised rhythms of circulation that underpin periodic market densities and thus become a basis for collective performances of bale opening in the marketplace, examined in the next chapter.

Figure 8 Customers scrutinising the displays of a Tunis shop advertising “luxury fripe” (2017)

Chapter V

The bale opening and the public renegotiation of cultures of consumption

As Yasmina[150] pours a second round of coffee for the female friends gathered in her living room, she explains: "We call this weekend get together *café-fripe,* we meet in different houses depending on which *"halan al-bala"* (bale opening) we decide to go to." Taking a bite of her croissant, her friend Wiem[151] interjects, "sometimes we decide spontaneously, it depends on *"al-jaou"* (the atmosphere) we look for*."* As the friends turn up the ventilator to let the hot summer air circulate, they recount anecdotes from fripe markets across Tunis. Attending bale openings, Yasmina chucklingly remarks, has become "an addiction*"* or "a weekly sport*"*. For the group of friends gathered in her spacious house in the upper-middle-class residential area *Hayy Ennasr*, buying from the fripe is not an economic necessity. Rather, attending bale openings constitutes a weekend pastime and female-only social activity. The promise of finding something special in the newly disclosed fripe bales, combined with the excitement of touring diverse marketplaces together, motivate the regular outings. "For us, fripe shopping is a pride and joy", Wiem exclaims, "even my daughters now prefer the fripe to the mall, they can see it is more interesting".

While second-hand consumption in diverse contexts in the Global South is often discussed with a focus on socio-economic constraints, and remains thus primarily associated with social marginality or poverty, the above encounter with Yasmina and her friend group opens up a more complex understanding of the motives underpinning fripe consumption in present-day Tunis. Indeed, the fripe marketplaces of Tunis have today turned into highly popular urban spaces frequented by urban dwellers of different age groups, social class and gender. The term *fripisation* is thus increasingly evoked to capture not only the proliferation of fripe trading in urban space, but also a broader sense of the prominence of the fripe in people's consumption habits, in their practices of leisure and dress, and in their patterns of mobility across the city. This chapter argues that the "*halan al-bala"* (bale opening) – or the coordinated disclosure of new fripe merchandise in different marketplaces, for which Yasmina and her friends gather – is central to comprehending the distinct cultures of consumption that account for the fripe markets' contemporary appeal. The bale opening as a collective performance promises not merely the act of purchase, but also the joy of discoveries, leisurely strolls and time spent with friends, and offers opportunities to assume the role of a spectator in a public event. Fripe consumption therefore provides a crucial perspective on the ways in which the fripe economy constitutes urban space. It shows how a physical marketplace becomes enacted as a site of temporary publicness and cultural production, positioning the specific cultures of consumption of the fripe as inherent to *fripisation*.

The disclosure of new fripe bales – referred to simply as *al-halan* (the opening) by many traders and customers – occurs in hundreds of Tunis fripe marketplaces, usually at bi-weekly intervals that differ from one marketplace to another and function as a central structuring element for the urban fripe economy: from temporalities of delivery and payment, to the coordinated turnover of fripe merchandise in diverse marketplaces and customer mobilities, the *halan* determines rhythms and dynamics of valuation work with fripe merchandise all across the capital. While the bales arriving in the marketplace are usually labelled to identify the product type and value category, the exact content of the non-transparent tarpaulin packages remains unknown. This uncertainty creates an atmosphere of suspense and often precludes uniform price-setting, turning the disclosure of new merchandise into a moment of collective valuation work, in which vendors, market customers, and often accidental bystanders or spectators reassess and negotiate the commodity status of diverse fripe items. Beyond the simple

[150] Appendix II., Interlocutor 17;
[151] Ibid;

moment of disclosure of new merchandise, the recurrent and ritualised performance of valuation in the bale opening must be understood as a quintessential moment of economic, spatial and cultural production that constitutes the fripe as an urban economy.

While bale openings occur in most fripe marketplaces of Tunis, this chapter focuses on an analysis of the specific *halan* in the *Bab El-Falla* fripe market. Before examining how the *halan* is curated and performed in *Bab El-Falla*, the first part sets out why an analysis of the bale opening is central to grasping the distinct cultures of consumption that co-produce *fripisation* in contemporary Tunis. It links the collective valuation work performed in fripe marketplaces to processes of spatial and cultural production that account for the fripe markets' popularity as sites of sociability and unpredictable encounter, setting them apart from other urban consumption spaces. The second part subsequently explores the specific rhythms and rituals that stage the socio-material encounters and collective valuation work of the bale opening in *Bab El-Falla.* The two remaining parts then examine the implications of the bale opening's staging as 'public event', demonstrating how it results in particular forms of spatial and cultural production. First, it illustrates how markers of social difference that normally structure access to, and interactions in the public realm, are weakened in the bale opening, creating distinct conditions for appearance and opportunities for 'being in public'. Second, it shows how collective encounters with fripe objects from 'elsewhere' become the basis for contingent translation attempts between diverse registers of value. This can result in objects being either incorporated into or adapted to local contexts of use, but can also produce moments of untranslatability.

Figure V.1 Fripe bales are displayed in the *Bab El-Falla* market before the opening (2018)

1. The bale opening and the distinct cultures of consumption of the fripe

The following three sections outline how this chapter approaches the distinct cultures of consumption of the fripe, centring on an analysis of the bale opening. The three sections together show how acts of consumption in the fripe are tied to recurrent, collective performances that constitute urban space. The first section sets out how the valuation work with fripe objects that qualifies the bale opening as a central site of shared value production extends scholarship examining second-hand consumption practices. It highlights a conception of consumption as inseparable from production, and as a social act. The second section interrogates understandings of marketplaces as a priori public spaces, explaining how the analysis of the bale opening foregrounds a conception of publicness as always hybrid and as contingently performed. It thus positions consumption practices as constitutive to temporary forms of publicness and particular conditions of appearance. The third section outlines how the socio-material encounters of the bale opening draw attention to material culture. It emphasises the role of the fripe as transnationally circulating objects in transforming consumption into an open-ended process of cultural and political negotiation.

a. Second-hand consumption as valuation work

Attempts "to standardise the value of commodities as precisely as possible" (Douglas and Isherwood 1979: 108) remain imperfect in the fripe economy, despite centralised sorting processes in factories that aim towards a degree of standardisation. Consequently, the fripe materials arriving in Tunis marketplaces often carry "thick layers of inscription" (Appelgren and Bohlin 2015(a): 160) that render their commodity value uncertain, and at times their very commodity status disputed. In urban spaces of fripe exchange, commoditisation must thus be approached as an incomplete and on-going process (Kopytoff 1986: 64), with market prices emerging as contingent outcomes of open-ended social relations (Narotzky and Besnier 2014). This account emphasises such incompleteness, and thus the importance of the fripe's materiality in determining differentiated processes of valuation that unfold in the bale opening in Tunis marketplaces.

The uncertain value of the commodities exchanged confers particular agency to consumers in participating in valuation. As research on second-hand consumption has demonstrated, labour-intensive processes of manual sorting and selection precede the act of purchase and transaction (Hansen 2000(a): 89; Valenciano-Mane 2018: 160), involving market customers in diverse registers of valuation work. Market customers and traders in second-hand markets thus jointly perform "hard work, a kind of invisible production" that "does not constitute the end point of the economic process but helps fuel its beginnings" by requalifying discarded objects for exchange (Hansen 2000(a): 184, 196). In Tunisia, the term "*farz"* (sorting) – discussed in Chapter III as an umbrella term for complex work processes in sorting factories – is also used to designate the often-tedious "consumption work" (Hansen 2000(b): 257) in which fripe customers become enrolled in the marketplace. This repositions "consumption as integral to the creation of value" (Sheperd 2008: 143) and underlines the diverse forms of expertise through which consumers engage in value production.

The heterogeneity and uncertain commodity status of the objects disclosed in the marketplace thus confers a crucial role to spaces of exchange as sites for continued valuation work. In the fripe economy, such processes of valuation are centralised in the recurrent, collective performances of bale opening. The rhythms and rituals of the bale opening thus provide a framework that allows vendors, resellers, customers, spectators, or accidental passers-by to jointly engage in market-making, and to enter open-ended valuation processes on an equal footing. Echoing critical scholarship on consumption practices,

an analysis of the bale opening precludes a neat separation of consumption from processes of exchange or production, foregrounding instead how "production and consumption are (…) part of a circular productive process" (Douglas and Isherwood 1979: 106) and how collective "exchange performances" (Guyer 2004: 97–98) take on a central role in value production.

Beyond an understanding of second-hand consumption as 'work', an analysis of collective valuation in the bale opening also underlines the particular thrills and joys associated with handling second-hand objects. This counters a reductionist view of second-hand consumption as being purely motivated by socio-economic constraint, echoing research that has demonstrated how distinct cultures of dress and fashion animate second-hand markets in Zambia (Hansen 2000(a): 247) and the Philippines (Isla 2013: 227), or in the "*rabish"* markets of Palestine where traders and consumers give new value and meaning to Israeli cast-offs (Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2019: 80). The bale opening also shows how consumption represents a co-constituted "social process" (Jackson and Holbrook 1995: 1914), speaking to literature that has emphasised the particular sociality of spaces of used good exchange as a motivation for second-hand consumption (Gregson and Crewe 2003; Appelgren and Bohlin 2015(a)).

b. Marketplaces and the production of 'publicness'

Marketplaces have often been described as public spaces of a particular quality, especially in cities of the Global North. Their "everyday sociality" that becomes generative to "casual encounters" and "forms of rubbing along" has been prominently discussed in research on urban marketplaces (Watson 2009: 1579). In addition, scholarly work has often underlined the prominent role of markets in bringing together people across difference, "creating a spatial concentration of diversity" in otherwise segregated urban environments (Hiebert et al. 2015: 15). Literature on gentrification processes and the displacement of traditional retail markets through different corporate retail environments (Gonzalez and Waley 2013; Gonzalez and Dawson 2015; Marinelli 2018) has even sought to measure the distinct "community value" or "cultural and social value" that defines urban marketplaces as particularly important public urban spaces (Bua et al. 2018: 7).

This chapter abstains from any a priori categorisation of fripe marketplaces as stable 'public spaces'. Instead, underpinning this analysis is a conception of publicness as necessarily "evolving" and "hybrid", because the "complex 'where' and 'when' of publicity and privacy" in the city "remains in flux" (Iveson 2007: 8). This chapter therefore examines how the bale opening as a particular performance of consumption results in the contingent enactment of hybrid forms of publicness. It investigates how bale openings "become happenings" that are "greater than the sum of their parts" (Tsing 2015: 13), producing temporary forms of togetherness in urban space that account for their special appeal as sites of consumption, but also of leisure time, work and sociality. A conception of 'publicness' as a contingent result of a collective performance draws attention to the role of norms and rituals in temporarily suspending or replacing the ordering mechanisms that habitually constitute "the public" as "a normative and hegemonic construction" (Warner 2002: 49). Performances of consumption like the bale opening thus have the power to unsettle "the regimes of visibility" (Staeheli et al. 2009: 642) that condition the appearance of particular bodies or social groups as transgressive and therefore exclude them from the public realm. In doing so, the bale openings not only provide possibilities for 'being in public' to those for whom "urban public spaces" are in fact often defined as "prohibited spaces" (Sawalha 2010: 14), they can also open up opportunities for agency in shaping the collective performances and their outcomes.

Through this analysis of the bale opening, this chapter therefore demonstrates how fripe marketplaces are contingently enacted as hybrid forms of 'public space'. This is shown, first, through the role of collective consumption performances in conferring a particular quality of 'publicness' to the fripe market that sets it apart from other urban consumption spaces. Second, it illustrates the hybrid publicness that emerges in fripe markets, as the bale opening oscillates between the anonymity of a recurrent public event and the peculiar intimacies that emerge through shared valuation work with second-hand garments and objects. Finally, the chapter underlines how the emerging publicness is differentiated, as the degree of openness varies and as the opportunities for participation it offers are unequally distributed.

c. Material encounters and the contingent emergence of new cultural forms

The bale openings not only become the site of dense, social encounters and interactions, they also provide the framework for staging "messy and surprising encounters across difference" (Tsing 2011: 3) with dizzying arrays of fripe materials – from used garments to diverse second-hand objects – that are disclosed in the marketplaces. As the fripe objects are imported from a distant and often-unknown 'elsewhere', they represent "transnational commodities" that are "grounded in several places and in complex ways" (Crang et al. 2003: 452). This also implies that the fripe objects disclosed in the bale opening lie "embedded in multiple, often incompatible, value regimes" (Narotzky and Besnier 2014: S9), which complicates their situated valuation in the Tunis marketplace. The bale openings thus generate socio-material encounters across diverging cultural understandings (Appadurai 1986) and demonstrate how commodification hinges on an-always singular "symbolic system that defines what is important, meaningful, desirable or worthwhile" in a particular place and point in time (Graeber 2001: 439). Consequently, the bale openings become a stage for complex and open-ended attempts of "translation" or "processes of establishing commensurability" between different value regimes (Miller 2008: 1129).

A close-up analysis of the performative processes of translation (Tsing 2013: 23, 30) that unfold in the socio-material encounters of the *Bab El-Falla* bale opening highlights how dense social interactions are essential for ascribing new meanings to fripe objects in circulation. Emphasis thus lies on comprehending the complex "cultural work of valuation" (Kirsch 2013: 436) that forms a prerequisite for the "production of the conditions of consciousness in which buying can occur" (Appadurai 1997: 42) in the fripe marketplace. The "specific materiality" of the fripe objects encountered in the marketplace matters to such contingent processes of cultural production, as it often "interconnects with the symbolic dimension of objects" (Mansfield 2003: 178). To highlight the complex and contingent attempts of incorporation that underpin fripe consumption, this chapter centres on socio-material encounters with used objects, such as toys or sports equipment, in the *Bab El-Falla* marketplace. More so than used garments, the great heterogeneity and often-alien character of these fripe objects makes apparent the active translation work that occurs in the bale opening.

This account thus adds to writing that has disputed and empirically debunked the simplistic assumption that globalisation, and in particular transnational commodity circulation, triggers a homogenisation of consumer cultures (Jackson 1999: 97). Scholars of material culture have amply demonstrated the complex cultural work through which consumers contingently incorporate diverse 'global forms' into local contexts of use (Miller 1998(a): 18, 19), thereby "sublating the general form back into specificity" (ibid 1998(b): 185). Building on such approaches, literature on second-hand clothes consumption has equally disproven the idea that global used garment circulations would simply translate into an

assimilation of clothing habits and the disappearance of locally specific dress. On the contrary, the active role of local used garment consumers in forging locally specific, hybrid practices of dress (Hansen 2000(a): 5) – often by creatively combining imported garments with forms of local dress (Milgram 2012: 206) – has been highlighted in diverse contexts (Ayimpam 2016; Besnier 2004; Hansen 2000(a); Isla 2013; Norris 2010). A close-up focus on the contingent production of the fripe as commodity form in the bale opening similarly testifies to consumption as an act of cultural co-production: at times, different scales and registers of value can be rendered commensurable, allowing for incorporation into local contexts of use and exchange. At other times, direct incorporation proves difficult, thus giving rise to collective strategies of adaptation or reinvention that highlight the "intrinsically cultural construction" (Bestor 2004: 129) of commodity forms.

As writing on used good and second-hand consumption has emphasised, such attempts to remake commodity forms are open-ended and can pose "irresolvable dilemmas" (Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2019: 35), resulting in the untranslatability of material objects and thus disqualifying them from market exchange. When attempts at incorporation fail, this is often due to material or symbolic inscriptions that render objects incompatible with local registers of value. In addition, such inscriptions can expose second-hand objects as somebody else's "discarded personal effects" (ibid 2011: 70), thus rendering visible unequal hierarchies of global consumption. The marketplace therefore becomes a stage for debating moral questions of worth, or the "unequal value of humans and things" (Pipyrou 2014: 542), positioning collective performances of consumption like the bale opening as sites for the articulation of a particular politics of consumption. As the next part of this chapter explores, producing the rhythmic, socio-material densities that underpin such processes requires the deliberate 'staging' of the bale opening as a bi-weekly collective performance in the Tunis fripe markets.

Figure V.2 Children inspect fripe toys displayed on lowered tables (2019)

2. The staging of collective performances of valuation in the marketplace

The temporalities of bale opening differ from one fripe marketplace to another and at times vary intentionally to reduce competition. As the timings of bale openings remain unwritten, knowing the bi-weekly intervals at which merchandise is disclosed comprises part of the tacit skill set of experienced customers. As Yasmina and her female friends[152] explain, "connoisseurs*"* of the fripe like themselves know dozens of such timings by heart, but also weigh up the particular fripe products on offer and "*al-jaou"* (the atmosphere) when deciding which *halan* to attend. The *halan* in the *Bab El-Falla* fripe market, the women agree, is best for women's bras and nightwear but is also attractive for its dense, inner-city flair, as it is located in the historic Southern *faubourg* of the Tunis *medina*[153]. "When do I get to go to the *medina* if not for the fripe", Wiem rhetorically asks, "we have to park our car a bit far, so we take a long stroll in an area I never usually go to".

Like Yasmina, Wiem and their friends, urban dwellers from across Tunis time their market visits to *Bab El-Falla* to coincide with the bi-weekly bale openings, triggering distinct patterns of urban mobility. The bale opening not only promises customers the chance of being the first to examine the "*bala jdida"* (new bale) – as originally packaged in the sorting factory – it also constitutes a ritualised, public performance that invites active participation. For traders on the other hand, the uncertain value of the fripe commodities contained in the bales they disclose turns the collective performance of 'opening' into a crucial prerequisite for market exchange and transactions. Strict calibration and a tacit set of rules are necessary to stage collective performances of valuation: first, synchronised rhythms and ritualised performances mediate the dense, socio-material encounters of the bale opening. Second, differentiated mechanisms of valuation work invite people to participate in processes of probing, negotiation and research that turn them into active market participants, and confer to the *halan* the character of a curated 'public event'.

a. Staging dense, socio-material encounters in the *Bab El-Falla* bale opening

On Saturday and Tuesday mornings, the entrance to the *Bab El-Falla* market is congested with handcarts selling oranges, with elderly vendors offering fresh herbs on cardboard boxes, and shoppers trying to push into the main market street with heavy use of elbows. A bit further up the *Bab El-Falla* street, butcher shops and fruit and vegetable stalls give way to shops and stalls selling fripe, with everything from second-hand women's underwear, to sports equipment, socks and children's toys on offer. The fripe trade dominates the upper part of the *Bab El-Falla* market and wooden and metal barracks form an extension of the main market street. With more than 200 active fripe trading spaces[154], the former fresh-food market has today become one of the most popular fripe markets of the capital, and its bi-weekly bale openings attract people from all over Greater Tunis.

Bale openings in the *Bab El-Falla* fripe market mediate the collective encounter with diverse second-hand garments and objects through a distinct spatio-temporal framework, recurrent bodily performances and a set of tacit rules that govern interactions between diverse market participants. None of the fripe

[152] I accompanied both male and female friend groups as well as mixed-gender family groups to different bale openings; repeated go-alongs were conducted with two female friend groups, one from the upper-middle class area Hayy Ennasr (Appendix II, Interlocutor 17), and the other from the working-class neighbourhood Kabaria (Appendix II, Interlocutor 18);

[153] The *Bab El-Falla* neighbourhood derives its name from the Southern gate to the Tunis *medina*, and was built up as *'rbat*', or *faubourg*, to the historic old city from the 12th century onwards (Berry-Chikhaoui 1994: 28);

[154] This number fluctuates rapidly and is here based on an average of four separate counts by the author in October 2018;

traders in *Bab El-Falla* remembers when, how or why the bale opening times were set to Tuesday and Saturday. Albeit unwritten, the temporalities of bale opening are strictly adhered to and determine not only the working routines of market traders, but have become a structuring element for the entire market and neighbourhood over time. As many customers time their visits to the fripe market to coincide with the disclosure of new bales, exceptional socio-material densities emerge in the market twice a week. *Al-halan* typically occurs in the morning, but follows no exact timing. While customers underline the need to "come to the market early*"* for bale openings, this remains vaguely defined, as market opening hours and bale opening times vary with the weather, the seasons and, most importantly, with the number of customers in the market. After opening the metal shutters of their shop spaces, traders normally display the closed bales on empty stalls or tables positioned in front of the shops. The white or colourful tarpaulin of the bales thus dominates the market street, with the non-transparent material reflecting the tension between uncertainty and promise that renders the bale openings so attractive to market customers.

With increasing levels of density in the main market street, customers begin to cluster around particular stalls or tables. While some carefully inspect the labels on the bales for product type, value category and sorting factory before choosing their position, others determinedly seek out a familiar trader or shop space. Friend or family groups who attend the market together tend to position themselves strategically, either at opposite ends of the same stall or around different bales located in proximity, so that communication via rapid hand signals allows for switching table or stall if one bale turns out to be particularly promising or disappointing. The ritual of disclosure begins when the traders decide that a sufficiently large group of customers has gathered around their bale: as Mouin[155], a fripe trader specialised in women's garments, explains, he waits until "customers stand shoulder to shoulder*"* on a good market day. Once one trader begins, this usually triggers a chain reaction throughout the market, testifying to the strict, albeit always-tacit, temporal coordination that underpins synchronised rhythms of bale opening.

The exact choreography of the bale opening then differs from one fripe product type to another, as distinct rituals mediate the encounter with diverse garments and used objects in the marketplace. The degree of heterogeneity of the packaged fripe materials differs, and labelling practices vary with different product types, facilitating the stabilisation of exchange value for some fripe items but not for others. For example, neatly labelled garment bales have already been graded into garment type and quality segment – such as "*crème"*, "first choice" or "second choice" – by *farazet* in the sorting factories. As the most tedious valuation work has thus already been completed in the factories, such product and value categories often allow market vendors to set a uniform price for all garments contained within a bale.

In front of Mouin's shop for women's clothes, the bale opening thus typically unfolds as follows: Mouin lifts up his knife as a symbolic starting sign, before cutting the plastic cord of the bale and announcing a standard price per item. Repeating the price per item, intercepted by "*bala jdida, bala jdida"* (new bale) at the top of his voice, he then unfolds the tarpaulin, laying bare the folded and pressed clothes, and pulls them apart one by one. None of the customers touches the clothes before Mouin, and he often intentionally prolongs the process of opening to increase dramatic tension. Only once Mouin throws garment items into the middle of the table can customers surrounding the stall pick them up, with their rapid hand movements deciding who is the first to inspect a clothing item. The opening of garment bales often unfolds in concentrated silence and communication is limited to routinised gestures. The focus of

[155] Appendix II., Interlocutor 19;

participants lies on the rapid inspection of clothing items, for brand, material and size, but also signs of wear, or faulty cuts or seams. As speed is decisive for securing garments, many women have developed intricate movements and tricks that allow them to assess an item within seconds, and a growing pile of clothing in front of every participant becomes an indicator of success.

Figure V.3 The opening of a fripe garment bale in the main market street (2020)

In stark contrast, the disclosure of so-called "mixed bales" containing garments that do not neatly fit into sorting factory categories, requires more flexible price-setting mechanisms and thus more drawn-out processes of negotiation in the bale opening. Most strikingly, tarpaulin bags filled with used objects – sorted in broad object categories, such as "toys and sports", "accessories" or "household utensils" – often contain eclectic collections of 'stuff' with highly uncertain meaning and value. Fripe objects categorised as "*jouets"* (toys) – officially banned from sale on the domestic market and thus packaged in *shkair* and exempt from labelling practices in the factory, like shoes – typically represent one of the most heterogeneous product groups in the market. As sorting workers in the factories confide, the category "*jouets*" often functions as a form of 'last resort', when workers fail to recognise or assign an object to a more precise product category. Consequently, a single tarpaulin bag inscribed with 'toys' can contain a dizzying array of books and games in diverse languages, sports equipment, cuddly toys, diverse accessories or decoration items. This not only confronts traders with great uncertainty regarding the content of the *shkair* they purchase from wholesalers, it also forces them to abstain from uniform price-setting, conferring even greater importance to collective valuation work as a precondition for exchange and transaction in the marketplace.

The difference in the way the bale opening unfolds can thus be gauged from afar, as a buzz of excited voices emanates from the toy stalls in *Bab El-Falla* and as a large crowd typically gathers around them.

Amine's[156] large, wooden stall specialised in the sale of second-hand toys attracts a mix of loyal customers, curious spectators and accidental bystanders for the disclosure of new merchandise. While regular attendees bring chairs from the adjacent café and place their steaming coffee cups on the vending tables in front of them, others remain standing as spectators at a safe distance. Amine and his two younger shop assistants stand behind the stall, facing their audience and each holding a white tarpaulin bag. When a critical mass has formed around the stall, Amine begins to pull the fripe objects from the tarpaulin bag, lifting them up one-by-one for everyone to see. Amine and his assistants are the first to inspect the objects, at times calling out what they are and setting a price for them immediately, and at other times handing them over for inspection to the audience. The objects are then passed around the stall for collective assessment, resulting in expressions of interest or the contestation of the initial price. When the quality, origin, or use of an object are in dispute, vociferous guessing, joint research and creative reinvention are set in motion.

Strictly synchronised temporalities, as well as ritualised and dense socio-material encounters, form the basis for 'staging' collective valuation work with diverse fripe materials in the *Bab El-Falla* marketplace. First, the *halan's* occurrence at regular intervals is crucial to conferring to the bale opening the character of a recurrent 'event', and thus helps to produce the bi-weekly market densities that enable collective performances of valuation. Second, the *halan's* routinised sequence renders it predictable, allowing diverse market participants to decide ahead of time in what capacity they want to participate. This allows for the unfolding of complex, and often contested, valuation work in the marketplace.

Figure V.4 Customers start to gather at a *Bab El-Falla* toy stand for the disclosure of new merchandise (2017)

[156] Appendix II. Interlocutor 20;

b. Collective performances of valuation work

On a particularly cold Tuesday morning in December, Heba[157], who comes to the bale opening in *Bab El-Falla* from the southern working-class neighbourhood *Kabaria,* scolds me for not wearing gloves. Pointing first to her own fingerless gloves and then my stiff, colourless fingers, she chastises: "You need to work with your hands, and you want to be able to move your fingers, otherwise you'll miss an open seam or a hole (…) or one of these". She directs my attention to a discoloration of the denim material of the jeans I had been inspecting. "Bleach", she states with affirmation and then, triumphantly, points to a second stain of the same colour. "See, you wouldn't have found this by just holding up the pants the way you do". Similar instructions or advice are frequently exchanged amongst – predominantly female – bale opening participants, including amongst complete strangers. Rather than just 'sighting' garments, experienced fripe customers subject them to intense material probing and make use of a complex repertoire of gestures to assess quality and size. The tacit knowledge underpinning such manual valuation work is shared with generosity and a sense of pride during the bale openings, and is seen as an inherently feminine skill. The discovery of flaws – especially those not apparent at first sight – is thus often celebrated as indicator of the high quality of "*farz"* (sorting) accomplished and becomes the basis for negotiating reductions. As the trader Mouin complains, "even when I open *"crème"* (the highest value category), my customers *"yifrizu"* (sort) more diligently than the workers in the factory, so I lose out."

When purchasing second-hand garments, consumers thus engage in routinised, manual valuation work that is considered a necessary form of expertise for participating in bale opening events. Research on second-hand markets in other contexts has similarly highlighted the intricate handy work that consumers tend to perform alongside traders (Ayimpam 2016; Hansen 2000(a); Valenciano-Mané 2018). Even the linguistic designations for second-hand clothes often reflect the central importance of skilful, manual probing for second-hand consumption: While in Zambia, the term for second-hand clothes, "*salaula",* translates as "selecting from a pile in a manner of rummaging" (Hansen 2000(a): 89), the equivalent in Equatorial-Guinea, "*asamsé",* means "to agitate or manipulate things with your hands" (Valenciano-Mané 2018: 160). In Tunis, the term *farz* for 'sorting' has changed meaning with the proliferation of sorting factories, becoming an umbrella term for the complex process that transforms container loads of heterogeneous fripe materials into neatly graded, packaged tarpaulin bags. However, the verb "*faraz*" (to sort) also continues to designate the specific activity of searching through piles of fripe merchandise in the marketplace. As such, the activity of *farz* is thus defined as a shared activity of professional sorters, traders and customers of the fripe alike, and is central to the act of both vending in, and buying from the fripe. During the *halan,* the hoarse calls of traders, "*ifriz*", inviting customers in the imperative to 'sort through' the piles of merchandise they offer, thus dominates the soundscape of the *Bab El-Falla* marketplace.

The valuation work performed through sorting in the *halan* thereby often blurs distinctions between professional sorting and private consumption. As is the case in other second-hand marketplaces, "self-employed resellers" have appropriated the marketplace as their "work site", therefore 'shopping' not for private use but for income generation (Ayres 2019: 123). In *Bab El-Falla,* predominantly female "*farazet"* (sorters) participate in most bale openings and remain largely indistinguishable from other market customers, apart from their characteristic hand trolleys and ability to negotiate bulk prices for larger quantities. Some *farazet* have established close relations with individual traders and stay behind after the end of *al-halan* to sift through leftovers or screen damaged garments for reusable textile

[157] Appendix II. Interlocutor 18;

materials. As is the case with female second-hand resale activities in other contexts (Ayimpam 2016: 276), the *farazet's* sorting work and transport of selected garments is frequently combined with other valuation work such as washing, repair or systematic re-packaging, often organised in distant urban places. The valuation work through *farz* in the bale opening thus blurs the lines between "labour and leisure, production and consumption" (Ayres 2019: 145) and the elusiveness of the productive process accomplished through sorting means that these activities often fail to be recognised as 'work' in the fripe. While the visible working public of fripe marketplaces like *Bab El-Falla* is almost exclusively male, tedious consumption work is mainly accomplished by women and in most bale openings women clearly outnumber men.

The valuation work performed at fripe stalls trading in diverse used objects is no less complex, but different in character to the bale opening dynamics at the garment stalls of *Bab El-Falla.* While for fripe garments, focus lies on detecting traces of wear and tear, or faulty cuts or material deficiencies to contest the set price, the disclosure of new merchandise at used object stalls normally sets in motion an open-ended process of collective valuation. This occurs because of the great heterogeneity and at times alien character of the objects pulled from the *shkair,* for instance at Amine's stall for fripe toys. Some of the fripe objects fit seamlessly into the category of 'toys' and are familiar in the Tunisian use context, posing the relatively simple task of evaluating the objects' functionality and their market price. Others, however, have uncertain use and exchange value in the Tunisian context, thus necessitating drawn-out processes of joint inspection and assessment. As Amine explains, it is crucial for customers to feel "that we (the traders) respect their opinions (…), so if several people agree this or that item can no longer be sold or needs to be sold at a very cheap price, I respect this as the decision*."* In differentiation from Mouin who sets a uniform price from the outset, Amine thus has to enter the price-setting process on an equal footing with the people gathered around his stall. As he underlines, negotiations over "*al soum al-shih"* (the correct price) or "*soum behi"* (a good price) need to result not only in a "just price*",* to use Roitman's term, that "suits both vendors and buyers*"* (2003: 220), but hinges on the approval of a majority of those participating in the *halan*.

The collective, open-ended character of valuation at Amine's stall is of particular importance for those objects carrying layers of inscription that risk either rendering them out of place, or disqualifying them from commodity exchange. 'Inscriptions' can mean quite literally writing on the objects, for instance in the form of nametags of previous owners or product descriptions in foreign languages. In a more figurative sense, inscriptions can refer to various material and immaterial traces that give the objects temporal depth and render palpable their complex "economic and social biographies" (Kopytoff 1986: 67). From tangible traces of wear and tear, to invisible layers of symbolic meaning, previous life cycles and origin stories remain often inscribed in the fripe objects, rendering them "historically, socially and narratively embedded" (Appelgren and Bohlin 2015(b): 5). Consequently, consumers must engage in "possession rituals" (Gregson and Crewe 2003: 7, 167) to reappropriate the material objects: one of the strategies frequently observed at Amine's toy stand is to devise narratives of previous use and divestment in the context of origin to make sense of an object's arrival in the marketplace and to create a basis for discussing future use. In addition, taking illegible objects apart – especially games with product descriptions in foreign languages – often enables the reuse of its material components or the recognition of its logic of play beyond the inscription.

As a close-up look at the bale opening in the *Bab El-Falla* fripe market shows, "the act of exchange performs far more than the mere transmission of value" (Lee 2006: 416). Rather, the recurrent, collective performances that unfold in the *halan* demonstrate how value must be "socially constructed" (ibid) between market traders and customers, but also curious spectators or accidental passers-by who

can assume a central role in differentiated valuation work with a wide array of fripe merchandise. The open-endedness of valuation and the positioning of diverse market participants as equal in their value assessments are central to constituting the bale opening as a 'public event', inviting people to participate in diverse capacities and for diverging motives, from professional resale, to household consumption or simple curiosity and pastime. This section has underlined how the physical marketplace and its distinct spatio-temporal framework forms a crucial basis for the staging of collective performances of valuation. As the next section sets out, the collective enactment of *al-halan* also simultaneously co-constitutes the fripe market of *Bab El-Falla* as a distinct site 'for being in public' in the city, setting it apart from other urban spaces and marketplaces in Tunis.

Figure V.5 Spectators at the *Bab El-Falla* bale opening often remain in the second row (2018)

3. Fripe consumption and the production of temporary publicness

When Yasmina and Wiem meet to attend a bale opening, they often spend the first part of the morning "dressing up or down", as Yasmina puts it. As Wiem explains, "disguising is part of the fun", and she adds, "what you wear depends on which fripe (market) you go to. I can go to *Menzah VIII* (a high-end fripe market) all made up, but I leave my handbag behind and wear no mascara when I go to *Sidi Bahri* (inner-city fripe market)". The goal of disguise, as the women explain, is not only to gain an advantage in price negotiations. Rather, intentional dressing down and shedding make-up, jewellery and other markers of social identity result in a form of anonymity that turns the fripe bale openings into particular opportunities for 'being in public'. As Wiem explains, "in the fripe you are incognito, you can talk as you want (…), you find a bank director sorting (clothes) next to a cleaner, you will never know".

The third part of this chapter examines how the collective valuation work accomplished in the bale opening not only depends on a regular enactment in urban space, but also becomes itself constitutive to a temporary togetherness that qualifies the fripe marketplaces as particular forms of 'publicness' in the city. First, the following section explores how valuation work in the bale opening hinges on the co-production of social value, and thus the bale opening's staging as a recurrent 'public event' that offers diverse avenues for participation and results in dense encounters between diverse urban dwellers. Subsequently, the second section analyses the particular, "hybrid publicness" (Iveson 2007: 9) that emerges through the temporary togetherness in the collective performances of valuation: while the bale opening guarantees unrestricted entry and exit with the anonymity of a 'public event', it also offers a framework for the often-intimate and personal interactions that emerge from joint valuation work, unsettling habitual social or gender norms structuring the public urban realm. The final section investigates the particular opportunities for 'being in public' the framework of the bale opening offers to those whose conditions for "visibility and appearance" (Staeheli et al. 2009: 642) – but also for active participation – often remain subject to social control, controversy or outright repression.

a. Staging valuation as a spectacular public enactment

Research on second-hand marketplaces has often emphasised how "sliding pricing systems and interpersonal relations of exchange" (Gregson and Crewe 1998: 39) compensate for the uncertain value and commodity status of the used goods exchanged. Trusting and intimate vendor-client relationships that develop through repeated interaction and over an extended period of time have therefore often been highlighted as characteristic feature of used goods markets (Appelgren and Bohlin 2015(a): 147). While personal vendor-client relations and market intimacies are indeed crucial to many transactions in *Bab El-Falla,* collective performances of valuation at the same time rely on the 'public' character of the bale opening. As is the case in other marketplaces, "a high degree of openness" and "low entry barriers" (Hiebert et al. 2015: 6) minimise the commitments and engagements that come with market participation, thus facilitating "consumer capture at the micro-level" (Cochoy 2007: 206). Consequently, *al-halan* in *Bab El-Falla* is intentionally curated as an 'open event' that offers diverse avenues for participation, even for those who do not formally engage in 'market exchange'.

First, the bale opening's organisation in open-air spaces – usually in front of shops or on stalls positioned in the open street – reflects the crucial importance of attracting passers-by as spectators or participants. As Mouin explains on a rainy Saturday morning, he prefers to skip the bale opening rather than setting it up inside his shop: "Customers won't enter the shop, only those who come specifically for my bale will enter and I can only sell a small part (…), so I prefer to keep it (the bale)." Meanwhile, Amine emphasises that his stall's location right at the intersection that forms the Southern entrance of the *Bab El-Falla* fripe market constitutes a crucial competitive advantage: "When you cross the rails and the street towards the fripe, the first stall you see is mine", Amine stresses, "and because the street space is wide here, I can gather a lot of people". In fact, the drawn-out bale openings at his toy stand are animated by a continuous flow of passers-by making their way from the Southern bus terminal and residential quarters into the fripe and food market. *Bab El-Falla's* long-standing reputation for being the "least expensive food market of central Tunis" (Berry-Chikhaoui 1994: 409, 391) benefits the adjacent fripe traders, as many of the commuters make a brief stop at the bale openings or get drawn into the event against their initial intention.

Figure V.6 Customers are tightly packed around a newly opened garment bale (2017)

Second, the bale opening's curation as a public event that invites both passive observers and active participants and provides flexible rules of entry and exit, is crucial to enhancing its open character. People thus join for diverse motives and assume different roles in the bale opening, with only some of them participating in market transactions in a classical sense. At Amine's toy stall, a group of loyal clients forms the stable core in the bi-weekly gatherings, and most of them enjoy his theatrical performances in a seated front row position and for extended periods of time. While these regulars participate vociferously in the valuation process, they rarely buy anything. As Amine confirms, second row clients are more important in terms of transactions. While they tend to remain standing, assuming the role of distanced spectators, these customers start to approach the stall and join the valuation process as soon as a particular item attracts their attention. Again other people frequent the bale openings for specific motives that remain largely invisible, or only become apparent over time. For instance, Fawzi, a white-haired, small man from the adjacent *Montfleury* neighbourhood, attends most weekend bale openings at Amine's stall to collect damaged toy items that are collectively assessed to be unfit for market exchange. Like Fawzi, other bale opening participants take part in inspection and price-setting, but never make any purchases. Instead, they collect leftovers for repair or further processing, at times for bulk prices but more often for free on the basis of tacit, mutually beneficial agreements with the fripe traders.

Finally, staging *al-halan* as a spectacular performance that entertains and amuses its participants not only increases its appeal, it also helps to break the ice amongst those gathered around the stall and thus constitutes a precondition for collective valuation work. The fripe traders assume a central role in generating an atmosphere conducive to the temporary togetherness required to perform joint value assessments and engage in drawn-out negotiations amongst complete strangers and in often highly heterogeneous social constellations. As has been observed in used good markets elsewhere, the tactical employment of "the theatrical and the carnivalesque" (Gregson and Crewe 2003: 61) in staging the

disclosure of new merchandise allows fripe traders to bind spectators to the 'event' and to put people at ease with one another. Heba, who says she comes to the *Bab El-Falla* bale openings at least once a month, stresses that *"al-jaou"* (the atmosphere) is at times more important than "*al-silaa"* (the merchandise) in guiding her decision which particular bale opening to participate in. "I prefer traders who are funny, (…) so I choose those where I know they will make good jokes and *"yamelou jaou"* (create good atmosphere)". Acknowledging the importance of *al-jaou*, most fripe traders use repetitive chants and slogans – at times repeated through megaphones or played from recorders – to attract clients and take up elevated positions to maximise visibility. As the bale opening unfolds, theatrical gestures and humorous remarks – often directed at individual clients – trigger laughs and responses from customers and set the scene for joint valuation work. Once the bale opening is in full swing, the traders often step into the background. The highly ritualised interactions and fixed sequence of the bale opening now structure the collective encounter, reducing the traders' role to that of a moderator.

In contrast to other consumption spaces, where exchange values are fixed and transactions only require minimal interaction, spaces of second-hand consumption often do not allow for "encounters without the dignity of recognition" (Gidwani and Reddy 2011: 1641). This is because the unstable commodity value of diverse fripe merchandise requires an exchange relation that takes into account "what is valued by both producer and consumer and hence validated in terms of social reproduction" (Lee 2006: 416). To stage the complex processes of collective assessment and negotiation that precede fripe exchange, the bale opening must thus not only be accessible and inviting as a public event, it also needs to generate temporary forms of togetherness, or intense sociability. Research on diverse second-hand trading spaces has shown the "particular sociality" (Appelgren and Bohlin 2015(a): 147) and forms of "relationality" engendered by their specific exchange practices (Gregson and Crewe 2003: 200). In the case of the Tunis fripe markets, the "successful fusion of consumption with leisure and entertainment" that has often been associated with the shopping mall (Zukin 1998: 830) is crucial to grasping the markets' particular appeal and in turn their functioning as sites for collective performances of valuation. The multiple opportunities for participation offered through the bale opening turn collective moments of valuation into temporary forms of togetherness that enable encounters across difference.

b. The 'hybrid publicness' of the bale opening event

Through the bale opening's staging as public event, the *Bab El-Falla* marketplace becomes the site of a distinct, temporary togetherness – or multiple encounters and interactions across difference around the bale opening tables – on a bi-weekly basis. The bale opening guarantees open entry and exit with only minimal commitments, and follows a ritualised sequence that affords the same rules for all participants, thus qualifying as a public event. Yet, the shared valuation work that unfolds in the bale opening requires close interactions between strangers, resulting in a temporary relaxation or suspension of habitual markers of difference, particularly social and gender norms. The bale openings thus produce a "hybrid" form of "urban publicness" (Iveson 2007: 9), enabling highly intimate and personal exchanges that would normally be deemed unacceptable in the public realm.

The temporary forms of togetherness the bale openings produce in *Bab El-Falla* are characterised by great social diversity, allowing the rituals and norms that structure collective valuation to mediate difference. While the social dynamics of bale opening differ markedly from one fripe marketplace to another – with a market's location and price range determining its specific clientele – the exceptional mobility most bale openings trigger often turn them into socially diverse gatherings that bring together different gender, age and income groups. The ritualised and strictly coded interactions of the bale

openings, which standardise client-vendor relations and thus ensure equal treatment to diverse bale opening participants, are crucial to mitigating the stark heterogeneity that characterises the social constellations emerging around the bale. The temporary semblance of equality when gathering around the bale is reinforced by strategies of disguise, especially amongst upper-middle-class participants, like Wiem and Yasmina, who deliberately conceal their social identity and purchasing power in the *Bab El-Falla* bale opening. Shedding markers of social differentiation – most obviously dress, but also manners and even language – is encouraged by flexible price formation in the fripe, resembling a "social process that is determined in the bargaining process by factoring in various criteria pertaining to the consumer" (Roitman 2003: 220). Pushing into the background typical markers of difference creates a vital basis for valuation work, shifting collective attention to the fripe garments and objects disclosed.

Around the bale, temporary forms of hybrid publicness emerge as the joint valuation work becomes the basis for often intimate conversations or negotiations that run counter to habitual social or gender norms. As Heba explains, "the bale opening is special, everyone talks to each other, people give advice, it is "*adi*" (normal)". Particularly when Heba attends bale openings alone, she often relies on the help or opinions of others, especially as few of the *Bab El-Falla* fripe shops or stalls possess changing cabins or full body mirrors. At times then, bale opening situations result in deeply private exchanges that would otherwise be unthinkable between complete strangers and in public urban space. Particularly noteworthy in this regard are the interactions unfolding around women's underwear stalls, for which the *Bab El-Falla* marketplace has developed a reputation in recent years. While intimate women's wear would typically be traded in a gender-segregated environment, all fripe underwear traders in *Bab El-Falla* are male. With bras constituting one of the most sought-after and expensive fripe items in the market, an increasing number of male traders have specialised in high-end intimate wear, and have normalised mixed-gender interactions during the bale opening over time. Male underwear traders not only demonstrate their expertise in assessing the comfort and quality of different bras and underwear brands, they also provide tricks for assessing size and fit and provide professional one-to-one guidance. As underwear evokes highly sensitive topics – such as changing body size or female sexuality – the all-female bale opening situations animated by male traders often trigger discussions of other taboos in the midst of the marketplace. For instance, a mother and daughter looking for underwear in anticipation of the daughter's wedding sparked a debate about appropriate intimate wear for a married, young woman, with different customers and the male trader expressing conflicting opinions and advice to guide their choices.

Figure V.7 Women gather around a male trader who unpacks new fripe underwear (2018)

When participating in bale openings, individuals thus become part of a temporary, collective performance that oscillates between the openness and anonymity of a public event and the intimacy that comes with engaging in a shared valuation process. Particularly around garment bales, where market customers often stand shoulder to shoulder and thus form a closed circle, the collective performance of valuation provides both a physical and figurative frame for close interactions across social and gender divides. As many fripe customers highlight, pledging allegiance to this temporary collective offers psychological relief or even has a therapeutic effect. Wiem, who deplores the accelerated rhythms of her job in banking, puts it succinctly: "Once you enter (the bale opening), you forget who you are and what you were doing just before (…). You are just there, concentrated with the others, everyone does exactly the same thing, the same movement. For me, the bale opening always works like a therapy, it has a calming effect like nothing else when I feel anxious or stressed." Like Wiem, many other market participants explain the enjoyment they find in being subsumed by the collective dynamic of the bale opening and in surrendering to its rhythms and normed interactions. For the limited duration of the bale opening – varying from a quarter of an hour at a garment stall to an entire morning at the toy stalls – a particular form of hybrid publicness emerges that opens up unique encounters and conversations that are crucial to experiencing what market customers describe as "*al-jaou al-khass"* (the special atmosphere) of the fripe market.

c. Temporary opportunities for 'being in public' in the bale opening

By generating temporary forms of hybrid publicness, the bale openings offer opportunities for 'being in public' to diverse urban dwellers, including those who do not have the means or intention to actively partake in market transactions. While urban space is essential for the making of publics (Massey 1994: 254), the "conditions for appearance and visibility" (Staeheli et al. 2009: 642) in urban space are always unequally distributed. For particular gender and social groups that are constrained in their access to urban space and thus deprived of their capacity to shape distinct forms of urban publicness, the fripe bale openings thus become a stage for appearance and active participation: both female market customers – especially from working-class neighbourhoods – and young fripe traders from deprived urban areas use the bale openings to become visible in the central city and to take agency in shaping both temporary and enduring forms of publicness.

First, while the *Bab El-Falla* fripe market remains a male-dominated environment in many respects, the collective moments of bale opening temporarily unsettle the market's gendered hierarchies. Women's mobility across the city for the bale opening translates into a clear female majority in the marketplace. Their presence contests gender norms that limit women's visibility and movement to neighbourhood public spaces with a high degree of social control, not only in Tunis but also in other North African cities (Hakim 2001; Shehayeb 1994). In conversations with Heba and her daughter Haifa[158], the fripe clearly appears as a central motive for leaving their "*houma"* (local neighbourhood). Female neighbours from *Kabaria* often attend the *Bab El-Falla* bale opening together to buy either for resale or for the private household, or simply using the fripe as a social outing. 16-year-old Haifa, who has attended bale openings with her mother, "since I can walk", as she laughingly states, explains that she loves the fripe because, "the *halan* is the best excuse to go to *"wust al-asima"* (the centre of the capital)". As the women from *Kabaria* and other working-class neighbourhoods of the capital repeatedly emphasise, attending bale openings outside of their *houma* is not only a question of quality and breadth of choice, but is also a means to escape the narrow social control of their immediate living environment.

While performances of sale and trade in the fripe market remain thus inextricably tied to the masculine body – with male voices, poses and theatrical performances dominating market life – bale opening situations are thus often majority or exclusively female. The dense gathering of women around the bales produces a temporary 'inside space' that shields participants from "the dominant male gaze" of the market (Jain 2002: 49). Many women therefore proclaim to feeling protected from harassment and petty crime in bale opening situations, as customers and traders look out for one another and often store personal belongings in their midst or under the bale opening tables. As has been noted in other consumption environments, such as shopping malls (Abaza 2001: 117), the bale opening thus offers women exceptional opportunities for appearance and dwelling, reducing the pressures they normally face in a male-dominated public realm in which "the presence of women (…) always has to be explained and accounted for" (Rabo 2005: 21). Simultaneously, the interactions unfolding safeguard a degree of anonymity, allowing women to take on diverse roles without fearing the social control and value judgments they face in their local neighbourhoods. As Heba stresses, participating in bale openings outside *Kabaria* allows her "to be treated like anyone else, to get advice from woman to woman (…)" and frees her from worries "about what others say or think about my choice or spending." While many women frequent the bale openings with friend or family groups, most female customers navigate the different stalls on their own and with great ease, benefitting from the temporary, female-dominated

[158] Appendix II. Interlocutor 18;

publicness that opens up spontaneous interactions and opportunities for simply 'being in public' rarely afforded to women in public space.

Figure V.8 Bale openings for women are at times intentionally staged away from the open street (2018)

Second, the bale openings equally offer distinct possibilities of public appearance and agency for many male fripe traders. Young traders, especially those residing in deprived urban areas, are often judged as "transgressive to normalized values" and their bodies are seen as incompatible with "existent notions of publicity" in the city (Staeheli et al. 2009: 642). Fripe traders often use the term "*hogra"* (lit. "disdain") to describe the disrespectful treatment they suffer at the hands of "*al-hakim"* (the state/police). Yassine[159], the 21-year-old cousin of Mouin who comes to *Bab El-Falla* from *Fouchana* to help during the bale openings, recounts often being stopped for identity controls on his commutes. He links the *hogra* he faces to his address: "when they (the police) see I live in a "*houma shaabiya*" (popular neighbourhood), they tell me to 'go home', as if it's forbidden for me to move around like anyone else". Such statements echo the territorial stigma that has been shown to restrain access to public space in Tunis amongst youth from lower social classes (Haj Salem 2020; Lamloum and Ali 2015; Melliti et al. 2018). For Yassine, the *Bab El-Falla* fripe market thus constitutes an exceptional space for 'being in public' in the central city. First, he often takes the lead role in performances of bale opening when the marketplace is crowded, thus temporarily assuming the authoritative position of a market trader. While Yassine admits to having been "a bit shy" at first, he now performs his role with ease and self-confidence, and visibly enjoys the respect paid to him as price-setter and expert vendor. Second, the contact with diverse clients but also with other fripe traders turns the market into an intense space of sociality outside of Yassine's narrow friend and family circle in his *houma,* and he frequently stays in the market after closing hours to drink and smoke with other young vendors.

[159] Appendix II. Interlocutor 19;

Finally, as a stage for public appearance and interaction, the bale opening also enables intimate vendor-client relationships of both temporary and enduring character. Such relations are frequently struck across divides of gender, social class, age and origin, and many of them emerge on the basis of shared valuation work in the framework of recurrent bale opening situations. Over time, mostly female clients begin to qualify as what fripe traders refer to as "*kliounat khassa"* (special clients): while such intimate relations are carefully concealed in front of other clients to preserve a semblance of "equality in front of the bale" as Mouin puts it, tacit agreements in fact guarantee such customers advantageous treatment. Invisible hierarchies between different clients determine who is invited to inspect new merchandise first, with *kliounat khassa* being informed of arrivals over the phone and at times allowed to pre-sort merchandise before the actual bale opening. While certain *shkair* or transparent plastic bales can be easily re-sealed, the "newness" (Hansen 2000(a): 182) of the garment bales is closely scrutinised by market clients and precludes such pre-sorting practices. Traders thus often resort to discretely setting aside items under the bale opening table, or grant generous reductions once other participants have left the stall. Trader-client relationships thus often take on a deep intimacy over time: as Yasmina recounts, she places great trust in her favourite fripe traders' advice, allowing him, as she says, "to manage my wardrobe and compose outfits for special occasions". Laughing, she adds, "he has better taste than me, and sometimes I feel he knows me better than my family or friends".

The emerging, hybrid publicness of the bale openings attracts urban dwellers from all walks of life and with diverse motives for market participation, turning *al-halan* into a unique space for encounters across difference and intense sociality framed by distinct codes of behaviour. As such, the bale opening situation temporarily alters norms of interaction in the public sphere, enabling intimate exchanges across divides of gender and social class, and offers opportunities for appearance, especially for those disadvantaged in their access to public urban space. The hybrid publicness that characterises the bale opening is thus crucial to comprehending the distinct 'cultures of consumption' that characterise the contemporary urban fripe economy in Tunis. From weekend outings amongst all-female friend groups, to weekly routines of those collecting for resale and repair, and the acquisition of new social roles amongst youth from deprived neighbourhoods, the fripe markets constitute urban spaces of great social complexity that open opportunities for 'being in public' to highly diverse market participants. In the unfolding of collective assessments and negotiations of value at the bale opening, fripe garments and objects from 'elsewhere' take on the role of material mediators, and become the starting point for the contingent – and at times contested – renegotiation of cultural forms and cultures of consumption.

Figure V.9 The heterogeneous array of fripe toys displayed at a *Bab El-Falla* stall (2019)

4. Material encounters and the contingent production of new cultural forms

Even though Yasmina's and Wiem's daughters are now teenagers, the women spend many hours at fripe toy stalls during the bale openings. While rarely buying anything, the two friends enjoy curious finds amongst the heterogeneous array of used objects disclosed at the toy stalls. As Yasmina remarks while waiting for a *shkara* of fripe sports equipment to be disclosed, "I love not knowing what I will discover when I go to the fripe, it's always a surprise". Both Yasmina and Wiem recount innumerable anecdotes about unexpected discoveries in the fripe, and deduce a lot of their knowledge or ideas about Europe and North America – and more specifically, Western consumer behaviour – from such material encounters in the bale openings. As Wiem explains while presenting her impressive wardrobe and accessory collection, "it is thanks to the fripe that my style is always special, I keep changing looks and people often make compliments but don't realise it is all thanks to the fripe and the new ideas it brings".

Like Yasmina and Wiem, many regular attendees of the bale openings stress that the fripe markets' appeal lies not only in their distinct sociality and recurrent, collective performances, but also in the unpredictable material encounters they offer on a bi-weekly basis. The wide array of garments and objects from 'elsewhere' that are disclosed in the bale openings take on the role of contingent, material "mediators" between diverse registers of value, as well as social and cultural meaning (Douglas and Isherwood 1979: 38). As the fourth part of this chapter explores, the *Bab El-Falla* bale opening thus triggers collective translation attempts, which aim to incorporate fripe objects from 'elsewhere' into local contexts of use. At certain times, the resulting processes of reappropriation or reinvention result in the contingent co-production of new cultural forms or the hybridisation of local cultures of consumption. At others, such incorporation attempts break down, disqualifying fripe materials from commodity exchange. When such moments of failed incorporation expose the fripe as 'discard', they

lay bare the global inequalities that underpin fripe consumption, yet can also become the grounds for the affirmative formulation of distinct local cultures of consumption.

a. Translation work with objects from 'elsewhere' and the co-production of commodity forms

In some of the fripe shops and stalls of *Bab El-Falla* – particularly those specialised in globally recognisable branded merchandise, like the sneaker shops (discussed in Chapter III) – processes of incorporation rarely pose a major challenge as they are normally limited to assessing wear and tear, and to negotiating market prices on this basis. However, at the toy stalls or other fripe shops selling heterogeneous used objects, unpredictable material encounters during the bale openings set in motion "subtle and discriminatory processes of incorporation and rejection" (Miller 1998(a): 18). Collective encounters with objects from 'elsewhere' in the bale opening thus determine whether and how particular fripe objects enter local contexts of use, transforming not only the meaning and uses of circulating objects but also local cultures of consumption in the process.

As fripe imports evolve with changing patterns of consumption and donation in Europe and North America, a continuous renewal of the types of fripe merchandise disclosed in the *Bab El-Falla* bale opening poses ever-new challenges of incorporation. Usually, the introduction of new commodities to a consumer market requires elaborate strategies designed by "*médiateurs marchands*" (market mediators) that accompany such novel products through marketing and advertising campaigns to stabilise the commodity's meaning and value (Cochoy 2001: 176). At the used object stalls of *Bab El-Falla* however, the continuous arrival of new or alien merchandise – from a dizzying array of toys, to medical bandages or kitchen utensils that are at times pulled from the same tarpaulin bag – is only mediated by the collective performances of valuation during the bale opening. Attempts to incorporate these diverse fripe objects into local contexts of use are often complicated by, first, visible and invisible inscriptions on the material objects and, second, differences in consumer habits between Tunisia and the fripe's multiple destinations of origin. For example, used object traders in *Bab El-Falla* have found themselves inundated with flasks and reusable coffee mugs in recent years, reflecting a trend towards the use of reusable drinking containers in Europe and North America. In the Tunisian context however, where low-quality tap water requires reliance on bottled water and coffee is mainly consumed on-site or in small paper cups, the diverse bottles and mugs have no obvious use and thus accumulate on the shelves of the *Bab El-Falla* fripe boutiques. Fripe traders also often confront objects carrying symbolic inscriptions that transgress local notions of acceptability and thus risk damaging the trader's reputation. For instance, Hakim[160], who sells accessories in a tiny shop in *Bab El-Falla*, hides away little owl figurines during a bale opening. He later reveals a larger collection of owls he has amassed over time and stores away discretely, explaining that, "owls represent *"ramz mtaa al-nahs"* (a bad omen) in Tunisia*"*. Unable to resolve the clash of meanings – between a symbol of wisdom and a bad omen – Hakim's only hope is to find a foreign customer to whom he can sell his owl collection at a bulk price.

[160] Appendix II, Interlocutor 21;

Figure V.10 Diverse drinking bottles have recently accumulated in the *Bab El-Falla* fripe shops (2020)

If straightforward incorporation proves difficult, complex processes of translation contingently attempt to remake circulating objects, redefining them as new commodity forms in the local setting (Miller 1998(b): 185). The collective performances of the bale opening are key to mitigating difficulties of incorporation, as dense socio-material encounters provide a stage for the creative adaptation or complete reinvention of objects that might at first sight appear 'out of place' in the Tunis fripe market. Customers or spectators with experience of "*al-aisha barra"* (life abroad) often speak with particular authority in the unfolding negotiations, translating literal and figurative inscriptions with the help of their linguistic expertise or knowledge of consumer cultures in the countries of origin. During a particularly crowded Saturday bale opening at Amine's toy stand for example, he pulls a dark leather bag for golf clubs from the tarpaulin bag. As he is unsure what the leather container could be used for, he passes the item on for inspection to the dense crowd surrounding his stall. Divergent interpretations are offered for what the object might have originally represented and what it could be used for in the Tunisian context. A young man recounts having seen a similar item as part of a set of hunting equipment on his travels to Germany and consults his smartphone to prove his hypothesis. In the meantime, an elderly man decides he could use the container to store his fishing equipment. Disagreement then unfolds over the price of the container, with the high-quality leather material being evaluated against the outworn straps and the unsuitability of the material for wet equipment. Such processes of valuation are always open-ended, at times allowing objects like the golf bag to "become something else" (Kirsch 2013: 438) in the new use context, and at times leading to its disqualification from market exchange when discrepancies in symbolic meaning or consumption habits prove irreconcilable.

Taken together, innumerable moments of such collective valuation work in the bale opening co-constitute the *Bab El-Falla* fripe market as a site of contingent cultural production. Through incorporation, transnationally circulating fripe garments and objects are adapted or appropriated to local use practices or "take on local cultural significance" (Edensor and Kothari 2006: 325), often without

physical alteration. At the same time, such contingent processes of incorporation alter local practices of dress, leisure or play, and thus translate into changes in local cultures of consumption. A striking recent example is the integration of second-hand saris into dress for Tunisian wedding celebrations. As fripe traders in *Bab El-Falla* recount, saris were first imported 'accidentally', as part of second-hand donations from European and American cities with large South-Asian diaspora populations. Due to their alien character in the Tunisian sorting factories, saris were often packaged into so-called "mixed bales" alongside other special garment pieces, such as workers' uniforms or martial arts outfits, or could at times be found amongst fripe toy products as the *farazet* classified them as "carnival costumes". Inadvertently, the saris gained in popularity when Tunisian women began to incorporate them into their wedding outfits, a trend that went hand in hand with an increasing fascination for Bollywood films and series in Tunisia in recent years. Specialised shops for second-hand saris have now opened up in fripe marketplaces like *Bab El-Falla*, with traders specifically importing them from the United Arab Emirates to cater to the increasing demand. The colourful saris are often combined with traditional dresses and scarves in Tunisian wedding celebrations, resulting in the emergence of new "hybrid practices of dress" and "styles of bricolage" (Reynolds 2012: 5) through the fripe garments' creative adaptation to local contexts of use.

As different types of knowledge, information and aesthetic registers circulate with the fripe materials, the *Bab El-Falla* bale openings bring distant geographical locations, lifestyles and consumption patterns into the realm of intimate and embodied encounters. The marketplace thus becomes a stage for complex and contingent translation work that shows how "cultures are continually co-produced in global interaction" or "friction" (Tsing 2011: 3), here in routinized practices of assessment and exchange triggered by encounters with diverse types of fripe merchandise. Cumulatively, such continuous translation work in numerous urban fripe markets of Tunis guarantees the gradual incorporation of always-evolving flows of fripe garments and objects into local contexts of use. This not only demonstrates the "social malleability of things" as they are on the move between different value registers (Thompson 1979: 88), it also highlights the central role of collective processes of fripe valuation in producing new commodity forms, consumption practices and cultural understandings. The promise of discovery that the unpredictable encounters with objects from 'elsewhere' hold accounts for the fripe markets' particular appeal as consumption sites. As the next section outlines however, periodic failures to incorporate heterogeneous fripe objects into local contexts of use and exchange expose the fripe as discard or surplus materials. The collective confrontation with substandard merchandise – or indeed trash – in the bale openings thus exposes the contested politics of fripe consumption that is renegotiated in recurrent bale opening events.

Figure V.11 Specialised second-hand sari shops have opened up in the fripe market (2019)

b. Failed incorporation and the contested politics of fripe consumption

In nearly all bale opening events, some attempts of incorporation break down, as garments or objects fail to requalify for commodity exchange due to their alien character, outworn materials or compromised functionality. In such moments of breakdown, the narrow and at times blurry lines between commodity and discard come to the fore, exposing the fripe as a transnational flow of surplus materials and charity donations. This confronts Tunisian consumers with an imminent "moral dilemma", revealing "power-laden relationships between territories connected through used good exchange" (Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2019: 102). Legacies of fripe imports (discussed in Chapter I) have long positioned Tunisian consumers as recipients of donations or discard from Europe and North America and thus inform the present-day politics of consumption that surface in Tunis marketplaces.

While layers of inscription on the fripe objects thus at times create intimate "processes of identification with the previous owner" (ibid: 70), they can also materialise hierarchies of consumption and the alterity that lies in the act of donation. Substandard merchandise in the fripe markets is thus often considered a direct reflection of the lack of 'worth' of Tunisian consumers, reflecting the intimate and frequently politicised relation between market value and feelings of worth. As a German national, I was often challenged to explain the moral registers that underpinned the donation practices of my compatriots. For instance, the accessory trader Hakim vents his frustration with a batch of heavily damaged watches and sunglasses he pulls from a *shkara.* Addressing me, he angrily remarks, "this merchandise was all collected in Germany, and now look at this (…), I mean, how do you explain that the richest people in Europe only donate *"zibla"* (trash)". Similarly, the toy trader Amine insists on a stark difference in quality between fripe merchandise collected in Switzerland and Germany, confronting me repeatedly with "completely broken toys from Germany" and concluding once that, "people in your country think

their trash is good enough for our children". In addition, the growing re-export of high-end "*crème"* fripe merchandise to European vintage shops from Tunisian sorting factories is often evoked to highlight the Tunisian consumers' positioning at the very bottom of the global value chain, with even high-end used goods being judged as 'too valuable' for the domestic market. As the garment trader Mouin puts it, "when my father used to work in the fripe during the 70s and 80s, they still found "*silaa crème"* (best-quality merchandise) in the bales, but now all the good stuff is directly sent back to Europe because the Europeans pay more for it". He sighs while sorting pensively through a pile of women's blouses displayed on one of his tables and remarks, "now we are just trading with "*les restes du reste* (leftovers) and need to get used to it".

Moments of failed incorporation – or more broadly, the expression of frustration about substandard fripe merchandise in the bale openings – also triggers broader discussions about the limited consumption choices available for ordinary Tunisians, situating fripe consumption within a wider politics of consumption in present-day Tunisia. The inadequate choice and quality of consumer goods in Tunisia thus often becomes a basis for denouncing the state's failure to provide for its citizens, reflecting the fripe's historical incorporation into narratives of state care. The low quality of 'made-in-Tunisia' and the gradual demise of local garment production[161] has led to the proliferation of import wares that are typically referred to as *"silaa kontra"* (counterfeit merchandise) or *chinwa*[162] on the Tunisian domestic market. The flooding of Tunisia's domestic market with *chinwa* merchandise inadvertently increased the desire for second-hand, as was the case in other contexts on the African continent (Ayimpam 2016). The difficult choice between *kontra/chinwa* and fripe is often debated during bale openings, particularly at the *Bab El-Falla* toy stalls. During the fasting month *Ramadan*, Heba's sister Nefissa, is searching for *Aid*[163] presents in the fripe for her three children. She explains: "It is *"haram"* (forbidden) to buy from the fripe, I should offer new toys for *Aid.* But the only affordable option is buying *chinwa* and it is not safe (…), the toys are full of chemicals and children can swallow the pieces". Like Nefissa, many customers of the fripe thus consider the *chinwa* merchandise not only as inferior in quality – captured by the expression "*tishri wa tayyish*" (buy and throw) – but also as inherently unsafe, as the merchandise is associated with "*iqtisad al-tahrib"* (the smuggling economy) and is thus considered to lie beyond state control. Heba voices such concerns when she underlines having "*thiqa"* (trust) in fripe products because "European states protect their citizens, there are a lot of regulations and product standards, not like here, where most of what you buy in the "*souk Libya"* of *Sidiboumendil*[164] (Doron 2015) is smuggled." Hierarchies of 'worth' underpinning consumer choices in Tunisia are thus not only related to global inequalities, but are also seen as reflective of the Tunisian state's disregard of "*al-mawatinin"* (its citizens).

While moments of failed incorporation in the bale opening thus reveal the hierarchies and unequal power relations that underpin fripe consumption, the tedious valuation work in the bale openings also becomes a basis for collectively articulating an affirmative politics of fripe consumption in Tunis. Attempts to retrieve value from used objects – even if unsuccessful – are in such cases used to demonstrate the moral superiority of Tunisian over Western consumers, as the former exert effort to reuse or repair the discard or surplus of the latter. The excess of Western consumer societies is thus not

[161] As discussed in Chapter I, the Tunisian textile industry has been predominantly export-oriented since 1972;
[162] This denomination is used as an umbrella term for all cheaply manufactured clothes and consumer goods, irrespective of the actual origin of the goods; while some garments and commodities are indeed made-in-China, others are imported from South Asia, Turkey or Morocco (and often enter illicitly across the Libyan or Algerian border);
[163] *Aid Al-Fitr* is the holiday that marks the end of Ramadan, and is celebrated by offering new clothes and toys to children;
[164] The market was transformed through a surge in cross-border trade with Libya during the 1990s, particularly with Asian counterfeit and cheaply manufactured products that were imported tax-free to Libya (Meddeb 2012: 63);

only considered a result of wealth, but is also ascribed to a more general loss of morals. As Mouin explains, "the fripe forces you to think about why people throw things (…), it tells you something about European societies, where people just buy and throw without thinking and you realise, they (Europeans) have lost the values we still have." Affirmatively, female fripe customers like Heba or Yasmina thus emphasise the "pride" that lies in buying from the fripe as it highlights a capacity to find "*qima"* (value) in things that might appear valueless at first sight, and signals the cultivation of consumer habits that emphasise durability and quality over constant renewal and wastefulness. As the fripe accessory trader Hakim remarks, "if you buy in the fripe, it means you value the object and pay attention to it as something *"farid"* (unique)". The increasing presence of unworn garments amongst the fripe – frequently exported as leftover stocks by fast-fashion labels and retail outlets – moreover renders visible unprecedented surplus production in the global textile economy in Tunis fripe markets. Especially young, upper-middle class Tunisians have thus picked up on discourses of sustainability and authenticity – often exclusively associated with 'Western vintage' – to forge new cultures of consumption in the fripe in recent years. From young fashion designers and labels proudly proclaiming to work exclusively with materials recovered from the fripe[165], to social media influencers gaining a reputation for their fashion statements solely featuring fripe garments (Meshkal 2020), a rapid renewal of consumer cultures currently alters discourses and politics of fripe consumption in diverse spaces of the capital city.

Collective encounters with heterogeneous fripe materials in the Tunis bale openings have triggered continuous, open-ended processes of incorporation, sometimes translating into the contingent co-production of new cultural forms and the alteration of local consumer cultures, and at other times triggering moments of breakdown that highlight the incompatibility of different value registers and lay bare the contested politics of second-hand consumption. Micro-level processes of incorporation have therefore gradually altered understandings of "*jdid*" (new) and "*mustamal*" (used) in Tunis, complicating commonplace associations of 'the new' with what is 'desirable'. Tunisian consumers now routinely identify "prior phases of circulation" as potential "sources of value" (Appelgren and Bohlin 2015(a): 156), as they demonstrate an object's durability, allowing the fripe's status as "*assil*" or "*original*" (original) to outweigh its secondhandedness. Such cultural understandings are not stable over time, but emanate from, and evolve with, situated, socio-material encounters. The dense interactions and negotiations of the Tunis bale openings hence offer an intricate insight into the evolving cultures of consumption in the contemporary urban fripe economy.

[165] Appendix I, Interview 42;

Figure V.12 A bale opening situation in a central Tunis street (2020)

5. Conclusion

Mr. B. walks up and down the spacious studio, where he records his weekly radio show "*Chroniques de Tunis"* (histories of Tunis), which has gained a considerable following due to Mr. B.'s exceptional knowledge of the city and talent for finding enticing stories from both past and present[166]. He gestures wildly as he now speaks about the fripe as a "Tunisian passion" and emphasises that the fripe markets of Tunis have no semblance with second-hand markets in any of the cities in Europe or North Africa to which he has travelled. Suddenly he stops in the middle of the studio and exclaims, "the *halan al-bala* is of course one of the most important events in our city, I mean how is anyone going to understand Tunis without attending at least a couple of fripe markets during *al-halan*?" As if uncertain whether I have grasped the significance of his statement, he adds emphatically: "you really need to speak to people about the bale openings, you will see it is the only topic you can discuss at any Sunday lunch invitation, whether you sit with a family in *Daouar Hicher* or *Hayy Ennasr*[167], they will have stories to tell about *al-halan*".

This chapter has provided a close-up examination of the bale opening in one particular Tunis marketplace in order to comprehend the specific temporal rhythms, rituals and dynamics of interaction that underpin its bi-weekly staging as a 'public event'. The bale opening is a basis for analysing the distinct cultures of consumption that have emerged in the Tunis fripe markets and account for their great appeal to urban dwellers of different social class, age and gender, not merely as 'consumption

[166] Appendix I, Interview 38;

[167] *Douar Hicher* is a dense and predominantly poor, working-class neighbourhood on the North-Western periphery of Tunis, see Lamloum and Ali (2015) and *Hayy Ennasr* is the upper-middle class residential area in which Yasmina and Wiem live, see Ben Othman (2009(b));

spaces' but also as destinations for leisure, sociability, or intentional detours on the way home from work or grocery shopping. The collective performances of valuation work that unfold in the bale openings confer agency to diverse market participants, transforming 'consumption' into a co-constituted act of sorting, probing, assessment and negotiation. Through participation in open-ended processes of valuation, market customers become part of temporary publics that allow for dense socio-material encounters and intimate interactions across difference. Such temporary forms of togetherness – or particular opportunities 'for being in public' – in turn allow for the joint renegotiation of the fripe as inherently contested commodity form. This turns the bale opening into a contingent site of cultural co-production, where globally circulating fripe objects can take on new meaning as they become incorporated into local contexts of use, or can turn back into discard, laying bare the politics that underpin fripe consumption.

As the most visible form of valuation work in the urban fripe economy, the *halan al-bala* is crucial to comprehending *fripisation*. It shows how the fripe markets produce a prominent contemporary culture of consumption in Tunis, influencing rhythms of social life and habits of leisure and shopping, and animating patterns of movement and interaction in the city. As a central site of collective valuation work in the urban fripe economy, the bale opening draws attention to the multi-layered productive processes at work in a consumption space. The marketplace thus becomes visible as a site for the emergence of new commodity forms and material practices, with attendant social relations and political articulations. Taken together, the innumerable different bale openings in Tunis fripe marketplaces should therefore be understood as integral drivers of *fripisation*: first, they produce socio-material densities and create temporary publicness, becoming triggers for the periodic proliferation of fripe marketplaces. Second, they generate temporal structures that connect disparate actors, processes and sites of fripe valuation across the city. From strictly timed cycles of purchase, delivery and payment in the wholesale quarter *Zahrouni* (explored in Chapter III), to synchronised circulatory mechanisms in diverse marketplaces that allow for a bi-weekly turnover of fripe merchandise (examined in Chapter IV), every bale opening in Tunis depends on the coordination of disparate actors in the urban economy. Third, rather than 'end points' of consumption, the bale openings must themselves be understood as the start of new cycles of valuation, as collectors of leftovers transform fripe objects through repair or disassembly, and as predominantly female *farazet* transport used garments for resale to women-owned tailor shops, private living rooms or other fripe marketplaces. The situated event of the bale opening thus opens up the multiple and evolving urban geographies of *fripisation* in contemporary Tunis.

Figure 9 Fripe traders wrapping up merchandise at the end of the market day in *Chotrana* (2020)

Conclusion

This thesis constructs an account of the fripe as a singular urban economy in Tunis. It does so by examining the three questions opened up by the term *fripisation* in the introduction to this thesis, namely: (i) the articulation of a global flow of discards and donations as 'fripe' in Tunis and thus as an urban commodity form with distinct historicity and cultural significance; (ii) the historical constitution of the fripe as a sector of Tunisia's economy and as a realm of city-making that remains nevertheless partially excluded from the 'formal' economy and the 'planned urban order'; (iii) the distributed forms of valuation work through which the fripe is enacted as economy in space and becomes an agent of urban change in contemporary Tunis.

The inherent untranslatability of the term 'fripe' constitutes a generative opening for exploring the specific urban articulations of the global second-hand economy in Tunis. The first part of this thesis builds a hitherto unwritten historical account of the fripe's constitution as contested urban economy, investigating the systems of differentiation that variably excluded or included the fripe into mechanisms of governing and modes of spatial production in post-independence Tunis. The second part of this thesis illustrates the entangled processes of market- and space-making through which the fripe is enacted in contemporary Tunis and becomes constitutive to urban transformations, as captured in the vernacular word creation *fripisation.* The remainder of the conclusion demonstrates the urgency of the problem this thesis addresses – namely what can be known and thus brought to matter as forms of economy in contemporary cities – in light of the catastrophic effects of the governance of the COVID-19 pandemic on the fripe economy in Tunis over the past year and a half. It shows how a perspective on the fripe as singular urban economy provides a tool for reading the present conjuncture of crisis and becomes a basis for challenging the narrow parameters of debate that have worked to remove 'the economy' from the realms of urban expertise, practice and politics that are here shown to constitute the fripe in Tunis.

The urban articulations of a global crisis

The far-reaching impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Tunis fripe economy once again lay bare the contingent urban articulations of the global economy. Disruptions to international trade, market closures that were ordered as part of consecutive national lockdowns in Tunisia, and a particular politics of pricing in Tunis fripe markets are inextricably intertwined, locating the fripe firmly in global market dynamics while simultaneously underscoring its singular constitution as a politically salient commodity form in Tunis.

The lockdowns imposed in Europe to stem the spread of the COVID-19 virus in spring 2020 caused temporary interruptions in collection cycles of charity donations, as well as in the sale of surplus stocks. More importantly, a global shipping container shortage and resulting disruptions to international shipping slowed down the export-import business between Europe, North America and Tunisia, and temporary closures of the Rades container port further delayed arrivals of fripe merchandise to Tunisia's sorting factories. In addition, the re-export business of fripe from Tunisia was severely impacted by periodic international border closures, together with the strictly enforced, nation-wide lockdown in Algeria that resulted in plummeting market demand and complicated cross-border movement.

While these disruptions of the import-export business were first felt by owners of collection and export companies in Europe[167] or fripe importers and sorting factory owners in Tunisia, their reverberations rapidly reached diverse market-makers in the fripe economy in Tunis. From sorting workers who suddenly found their factories closed to wholesalers who lost their principal clients – first from Algeria and then on the domestic market when a national lockdown was imposed – the crisis resulted in a rapid unmaking of scales, demonstrated through its impacts on multiple locations of fripe valuation work in Tunis. When the Tunis fripe markets were allowed to reopen with the lifting of the first lockdown in early summer 2020, the wholesalers had therefore been left with their winter stocks and summer wear remained scarce. To make up for the losses incurred through unsold winter merchandise, they greatly inflated wholesale prices, confronting retail traders with a difficult situation: while most had remained without income and unsold garments were piling up in their shops or storages, they now had to invest in summer merchandise. To buy new bales, many fripe traders were hence forced to borrow money and subsequently raised consumer prices to recover at least parts of their expenses.

The global crisis thus became directly palpable in skyrocketing prices in Tunis fripe marketplaces, as was the case in second-hand economies elsewhere on the African continent. The particular political salience of such price hikes in the Tunis fripe however can only be understood through an insight into the fripe's distinct political economy and socio-spatial histories that associate it with a post-independence promise of a 'life in dignity' for all Tunisians. In the 2011 revolution, the slogan – "*amal, hurriya, karama wataniyya"* (work, freedom, national dignity) – came to underscore the socio-economic demands of protestors (Dakhli 2013) who deplored the state's failure to provide the basic conditions for a life in dignity (e.g. Ayeb 2011; Allal 2016). Ever since, exacerbating socio-economic crisis has only reinforced such grievances, with IMF-imposed austerity and the depreciation of the Tunisian Dinar triggering inflation and reducing people's purchasing power (Aliriza 2020; Ben Rouine 2018). The import of fripe merchandise in foreign currency entailed price increases even before the COVID-19 pandemic, helping to spur on waves of socio-economic protest (Middle East Eye 2018, 2019, The Washington Post 2021). As the income of the average Tunisian family has shrunk at even more dramatic rates over the past year (Meshkal 2021(b)), renewed price hikes compromise the affordability of the fripe for increasing numbers of urban dwellers. This signals the rupture of a symbolic social contract between the state and its citizenry and turns the city's fripe markets into potential sites for political contestation.

Historically constituted systems of differentiation

Despite the politicised character of fripe pricing, which has prompted the government to repeatedly postpone sector reform over the past decade, the governance of the COVID-19 pandemic highlights how historically constituted systems of differentiation have deliberately denied the fripe recognition as 'urban economy'. As the first part of this thesis demonstrates, contemporary framings of the fripe as 'black box', and thus as a realm beyond formal knowledge on 'the economy' and 'the planned urban order', have emerged through trajectories of partial incorporation of the fripe into modes of government and spatial production in post-independence Tunis. Exposing the performative mechanisms of delimitation that underpin prefixes like 'informal' or 'unplanned' sheds new light on the politics that position the fripe as contested urban economy. The power of such historically constituted systems of differentiation becomes particularly evident – and politically salient – in moments of crisis, as was the case with repeated fripe market closures during consecutive COVID-19 lockdowns and a tragic blaze that destroyed a part of the oldest Tunis fripe market in May 2020.

[167] Appendix I, Interview 41;

First, the systematic closure of weekly *souks* and specialised fripe markets in Tunis, from the initial national lockdown in spring 2020 to the latest closures decided on April 7th 2021, accentuate the continued disregard for the fripe as an integral part of the urban economy. While official debates on the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic centred on tourism – a crucial source of foreign exchange revenue in Tunisia – the catastrophic impacts of forced market closures in and beyond Tunis went largely unnoticed. Reflecting the long-standing stigmatisation of unenclosed *souks* as crowded and unhygienic spaces, the authorities ordered the closure of open-air markets in Tunis every time infection levels soared, while covered *marchés* and supermarkets continued to operate without restrictions. In addition to jeopardising the fresh food supplies of a majority of urban dwellers, such market closures deprived Tunis residents of their access to affordable clothes, shoes or household equipment from the fripe. While state aid to those affected by the lockdowns was meagre and patchy to say the least[168] (Meshkal 2021(a)), the non-formalised character of most fripe markets excluded the bulk of those earning a living in the fripe trade from any form of state support, leaving not only market traders, but also transporters, itinerant vendors and diverse resellers without income. The fripe's exclusion from what matters as 'economy' in the midst of an exacerbating socio-economic crisis was facilitated by the absence of employment figures, information on revenues generated in the sector, or other forms of authoritative knowledge that could have contested its framing as an 'unproductive' trade without added value to the national economy.

Second, the reactions to a fire that destroyed large parts of the oldest fripe market of Tunis in the *Hafsia* in May 2020 demonstrate that the fripe trade's presence in the city continues to be 'tolerated' rather than 'recognised', a positioning that is perpetuated by the fripe's absence from official accounts of urban development and change. During the night of Wednesday, May 13th 2020, a blaze spread rapidly across an area of 1000 m^2, ravaging inflammable wooden market stalls and bales of fripe wares held in the adjacent shops and storages. The incident turned to ashes the livelihoods of 13 fripe traders in the inner-market and occurred at a time when their businesses had already been thrown into disarray by the COVID-19 lockdown, which had forced traders to keep their market closed for two months. While the fire attracted widespread media attention (Reuters 2020) and members of the municipal council came to visit the destroyed market, the fripe traders were wary of the authorities' attention, fearing that the razing of stalls could be used as a pretext to seize the municipal land on which they had auto-constructed the market during the 1960s. To pre-empt losing what one of the *Hafsia* traders described as "*blasetna fil medina*" (our place in the city), the traders hurriedly erected concrete foundations at the centre of the destroyed market. While no attempt was made to seize the municipal land after the fire, the traders' mistrust of "*al-hakim"* (the state) reflects the fripe trade's continued exclusion from mechanisms of formal recognition – such as titling and registration procedures – even in locations where fripe markets became consolidated decades ago and where its trader constituencies assumed a central role in processes of urban transformation.

Such moments of crisis expose the enduring and material effects of the systems of differentiation that have worked to position the fripe as a contested urban economy in Tunis. This highlights the importance of explicitly interrogating the formal regimes of knowledge production that produce and perpetuate various pre-fixes – such as the 'informal' or the 'unplanned' – excluding vast realms of economic activity from full recognition in contemporary cities. Understanding the historical constitution of such systems of differentiation draws attention to, first, the role of various state actors in producing shifting delimitations of the economy, using ambiguous mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion as tools for

[168] Two payments of 200 TD (appr. 60€) were made to the head of the household, but only a fraction of applicants were accepted;

governing. Second, it sheds light on grounded histories of space-making that render legible the economy's role in structuring urban space – from the consolidation of particular urban forms to the production of evolving patterns of socio-spatial order – while simultaneously accounting for its official exclusion from planning policies and conceptions of what constitutes 'the urban order'. Beyond the context of the Tunis fripe economy, such a perspective makes the case for reconsidering urban economies – often framed as a priori 'informal economies' in cities of the Global South – as historically constituted realms of government and spatial production. This approach to economies provides a vantage point from which to investigate processes of urban transformation and the politics that underpin them.

Shifting urban geographies of the economy

Comprehending the fripe as an historically constituted urban economy is a precondition to analysing its contemporary enactment in and through urban space. The unstable commodity status of fripe imports draws attention to the distributed forms of valuation work required to enable their renewed circulation in Tunis, connecting disparate actors and sites across the city and providing insight into the fripe's structure as urban economy. An investigation of collective enactments of fripe valuation in urban space renders visible the fripe economy's role as agent of – often contested – urban change. From localised urban transformations and temporary collective performances, to webs of interdependencies that tie together different sites of *fripisation*, this exposes the shifting urban geographies of the fripe economy in contemporary Tunis. Such an emphasis on the entanglements between market- and space-making shows in a new light recent fripe market closures that were imposed as a part of the sanitary measures to curb the spread of COVID-19, elucidating the far-reaching impacts of upending collective enactments of fripe valuation in urban space.

Repeated fripe market closures in the capital over the past 18 months temporarily disrupted the collective enactments of valuation work analysed in this thesis, halting or even reversing different processes of *fripisation* in the city. The forced shut-down of marketplaces not only affected the traders and customers frequenting these physical market sites, it also upended the synchronised mechanisms of circulation that enable their functioning, thus provoking knock-on effects for diverse market-makers and in different sites of valuation work across Tunis. First, the loss of periodic market densities and coordinated patterns of turnover of fripe merchandise adversely affected shopkeepers, street vendors, waste collectors, female resellers, as well as numerous auxiliary businesses enrolled in the marketplaces' circulatory mechanisms. Second, beyond the physical marketplace, wholesalers, transporters and sorting workers who enable the movement and intermittent stoppage of different fripe commodities were also impacted. Even when the Tunis fripe markets were allowed to reopen, most traders lacked cash to invest in new fripe bales and were thus unable to revive joint temporalities of delivery, payment and resale. Consequently, few marketplaces succeeded in resuming regular patterns of bale opening; the collective performances of valuation work staging the socio-material encounters and negotiations that constitute vital preconditions for fripe consumption, and thus market exchange.

The lasting rupture of diverse collective enactments of fripe valuation translated into visible changes in urban space, returning residential calm to the backstreets of the Tunis warehouse quarter and different fripe street markets in the inner city, and halting bi-weekly processes of market proliferation during the bale openings in different urban districts. In the meantime, however, market closures also prompted shifts in urban geographies of fripe valuation, circulation and exchange, driving less visible processes of *fripisation* in other urban spaces. First, itinerant fripe traders and *nassaba* (street vendors) rapidly reorganised to create new commercial densities when the fripe markets closed. At times, they did so by

reaching mutually beneficial agreements with the police or local officials to revive parts of the fripe markets, building upon existing modes of cooperation between traders and diverse state actors in the fripe economy. At other times, the *nassaba* risked confiscation or arrest to benefit from their new monopoly position in providing fripe merchandise by clustering around supermarkets that remained open. Second, alternative channels of fripe distribution and sale gained in importance when marketplaces were shut down. For instance, many fripe shopkeepers whose businesses were officially closed stayed in touch with their loyal clients over the phone, inviting them to collect items or inspect leftover merchandise. In some shops, "*kliunat khassa"* (special clients) were convened for 'private bale openings', which took place behind closed doors or drawn curtains and allowed traders to charge a substantial mark-up. Simultaneously, pre-existing channels of resale – most of which are operated by female *farazet* (sorters) – expanded rapidly over the past year. Diverse, mainly female-run businesses, from hair salons or beauty parlours to tailor shops, as well as parts of private houses, were thus transformed into fripe resale locations. In addition to guaranteeing access to affordable clothing and income generation, such resale locations functioned as rare spaces for female sociability beyond the family circle during the lockdowns.

These most recent shifts in urban geographies of *fripisation* highlight the co-constitutive character of economic processes and urban space, demonstrating how enforced market closures lastingly disrupted collective enactments of fripe valuation but also provoked inconspicuous forms of spatial production in urban locations that have found little room for consideration in this thesis. Analysing the economy through the specific processes that articulate it in urban space foregrounds a conception of market-makers as space-makers (and vice versa), therefore drawing attention to spatial practices – for instance of navigation, boundary-making or staging – as integral element to the making of markets. This in turn advances an ontology of the economy as both spatially constituted and as a central agent of urban transformation. As this thesis highlights, market-making can serve as an organisational basis to collectively compete for and remake urban space, especially for those who remain excluded from official mechanisms of city-making. Less visibly, routinised practices of market-making of diverse urban dwellers – from traders to market customers or resellers – renegotiate boundaries between private and public realms, alter the uses of urban space, or expand city limits, and thus co-produce urban change. Beyond the particular case of the fripe in Tunis, the evolving urban geographies of the economy foreground distributed forms of agency and the politics of their interconnection, thus enabling alternative accounts of urban transformation.

Reclaiming 'the economy' as a sphere of politics

Initial hopes that the political opening in the aftermath of the 2011 Tunisian revolution would allow for reclaiming 'the economy' as a sphere of radical politics were rapidly dashed. While the demise of the Ben Ali regime weakened political taboos regarding socio-economic inequalities and corruption in Tunisia, attempts to channel revolutionary demands for social and economic justice into a political agenda that would formulate alternatives to Tunisia's extroverted neoliberal growth model failed (Allal 2016: 19). In fact, the resumption of Tunisia's long legacy of foreign borrowing from the IMF (Murphy 1999: 96), renewed in 2013 and subsequently expanded by a series of technocratic governments, worked systematically to remove 'the national economy' once again from the sphere of politics (Fernández-Molina 2018: 385). The negotiation of consecutive loan packages – the most recent of which has just been concluded – reduced the management of the national economy to a technocratic numbers-game dictated by the overlapping conditionalities of IMF-loans, accompanying WB development policy loans and political and economic stipulations by the EU and other foreign donors (Aliriza 2020: 37). The exacerbated socio-economic crisis since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Tunisia has not

translated into any critical shifts in this narrow political debate on 'the national economy'. On the contrary, the sanitary measures taken by the government reconfirm its disregard for realms of economic activity like the fripe that provide employment and vital supplies to large numbers of Tunisians, and yet continue to be excluded from what can be officially governed as 'economy' due to a lack of authoritative economic knowledge and in particular the absence of a production process in the classical sense.

The crisis that is currently unfolding in the urban fripe economy in Tunis reiterates the urgency of the question this research poses, namely what can be known – and thus recognised and brought to matter – as practices and forms of economy in contemporary cities. In constructing an account of the fripe as singular urban economy, this research intentionally removes 'the economy' from a sphere of abstract calculation and expert knowledge, anchoring it instead in a realm of practice, knowledge and experience that is intimately familiar to a large majority of contemporary Tunis residents. In doing so, this thesis advances the notion of the 'urban economy' as a tool for extending knowledge production to spheres of urban co-production that are normally cast as undeserving of economic analysis in their own right. The resulting epistemological and ontological approach contests the narrow parameters of contemporary debate on the national political economy in two ways: one is the foregrounding of new types of expertise and diverse modes of production as a basis for comprehending what makes the economy and determines its evolving spatial forms in the city. The other is the advancement of an understanding of market-making as a contingent result of concrete negotiations and contestations over urban space and the urban order, repositioning a seemingly mundane realm of the economy as a sphere of urban politics.

Knowing the fripe as an economy relies first and foremost on the practices, expertise and accounts of its diverse market-makers. Some of these market-makers, such as first-generation rural migrant traders, have historically been excluded from what can be recognised as 'urban economy' in Tunis and are thus not normally perceived to have economic expertise. Other actors in the fripe economy, such as local state agents, female resellers or market customers, tend to be excluded from consideration as market-makers altogether. Insisting on producing knowledge through an engagement with these diverse market-makers illuminates the variegated productive processes constituting the urban economy, challenging an ontology of the fripe as an 'unproductive' commercial activity with discard objects. The understanding of the urban economy this account brings to the fore thus demonstrates, first, the grounded socio-spatial histories that underpin its present-day structures in the urban realm, highlighting how the economy becomes a crucial resource for collective social organising and the co-production and consolidation of urban space. Second, it underscores a conception of the economy as a continuous realm of meaning-making – productive of a distinct language, commodity forms and consumer cultures, and professional or kinship identities – that forms an integral element of urban life. Finally, the urban economy here emerges as a field of evolving power relations, characterised by exploitative hierarchies and extractive modes of government, but also by openings that allow for the circumvention of dominant power constellations. Taken together, this approach advances an understanding of the economy through its singular articulations and enactments in the contemporary city, contesting the narrow delimitations of what can be recognised as 'economy' and can thus be brought into the orbit of contemporary political debate.

The epistemological and ontological perspective underpinning the notion of the 'urban economy' this thesis advances thus carries particular political implications. An emphasis on the economy as constitutive to, and in turn knowable through, urban space precludes an abstraction of 'the economic' from the concrete social and political demands and struggles that come to the fore by grounding it in particular urban environments. This reorients the politics of economy away from an abstract sphere of expert calculation – dictated by loan conditionalities and monopolised by numbers games in

contemporary Tunisia – towards different sites of urban practice, and thus places it under renewed public scrutiny. The notion of the 'urban economy' therefore deliberately highlights the entangled governance of spatial and economic processes, calling for modes of urban governance that move away from reductive framings of economies as 'informal' and 'unplanned' and instead recognise and take into account their distinct agency in structuring and ordering urban space. Showing how mechanisms of spatial governance directly impact processes of market-making hence extends the politics of the economy to decisions on conditions for access to urban public space, regulations on construction and occupancy rights, and other forms of planning, policy and regulation typically located in the realm of 'urban governance'.

The concept of the 'urban economy' therefore positions economic activities as drivers of diverse forms of urban transformation, including processes of change that circumvent, alter or contest the prevailing urban order. Consequently, the economy appears as sets of practices through which urban change processes are co-produced and at times become politicised, as captured in the Tunisian context by the word creation *fripisation.* From tangible transformations of the built environment that trigger open conflict to inconspicuous alterations of urban space that quietly readjust power relations between gender groups or migrant traders and established shopkeepers; processes of market-making hence become the basis for renegotiating the officially delimited urban order. Similar to more amply documented urban struggles related to housing, access to infrastructure, or public space in contemporary cities, the economy is here brought to matter as a crucial sphere of urban politics. Histories of partial incorporation of economies that are not officially planned for nor accommodated in the city render particularly visible the politics that underpin seemingly mundane, interconnected processes of market- and space-making. Beyond redefining what can be known and brought to matter as economies in contemporary cities, building accounts of such singular urban economies opens up new imaginaries for the formulation of a critical politics of the economy in the future.

Appendix I

INTERVIEWS CITED

Only interviews cited in footnotes to the main text are listed and names are only disclosed if explicit consent was given. All interviews listed were scheduled as formal research interviews and recorded (unless noted otherwise) and written consent was obtained. Many of these formal interview situations resulted in subsequent informal meetings (see introductions to Part One and Two for a detailed discussion) that are not included in the table below.

Interview N°	Name/institution	Date and location
1	Two co-founders of the citizens' initiative *Winouetrottoir?* (where is the sidewalk?), involved in the petition against informal markets/street vending to the Tunis governor;	Coffeeshop in Lac II, Tunis, November 28th 2017
2	Tarek Ben Jezia, Director General of the *Institut National de la Consommation* (INC) (National Consumption Institute);	INC Office, Tunis, August 5th 2018
3	Senior employee in charge of textile sector, Association de la Promotion de l'Industrie et de l'Innovation (APII);	APII Office, Tunis, April 21st 2018
4	Vintage shop owner in Paris, subsequent tour of two vintage shops and warehouse *(not recorded);*	Paris 19th and 20th arrondissement, France, November 17th and 18th 2017
5	Importer/fripe sorting factory owner in Bizerte, subsequent factory visit with main factory supervisor *(not recorded);* Second interview with same sorting factory owner *(not recorded);*	Sorting Factory, Southern periphery of Bizerte, December 4th 2017 Chez Joseph Restaurant, Lafayette, Tunis, July 21st 2018
6	Importer/fripe sorting factory owner in Sfax, with subsequent factory visit *(not recorded);*	Sorting Factory, Northern periphery of Sfax, July 8th 2018
7	Public relations officer, OCT (Office du Commerce Tunisien); Second meeting to receive estimates for fripe export/import volumes;	OCT Office, Tunis, April 20th 2018 April 26th 2018
8	Senior Spanish employee of transnational shipping company in Rades Container Port;	Office of transnational shipping company, Rades container port, Tunis, October 23rd 2019
9	Professors of Geography, University of Tunis, Prof. Mourad Ben Jalloul, Prof. Hamadi Tizaoui, Prof. Fawzi Zerai; Including assisted library and catalogue search;	Three separate meetings, University of Tunis, Faculty for Social Sciences, October–December 2017
10	Prof. Hassan Boubakri, University of Sousse/Sfax Makrem Mandhouj, University of Sousse/Sfax; Including assisted library and catalogue search; Field visit of fripe market and Msaken market;	University of Sousse, Sousse, October 25th–26th 2019
11	Prof. Faouzi Saadaoui, Institut Supérieur d'Histoire du Mouvement National;	Manouba University, Tunis, August 17th 2018
12	Prof. Bechir Yazidi, Institut de l'histoire de la Tunisie contemporaine; Including assisted library, catalogue and archive search;	Manouba University, Tunis, May 14th 2018

13	Director of Geography Laboratory SYFACTE, Prof. Ali Bennasr and Prof. Fethi Rekik;	University of Sfax, Sfax, October 30th 2018
14	Olfa Ben Medien, Faculté d'Urbanisme, ISTEUB (Institut Supérieur des Technologies de l'Environnement et de l'Urbanisme);	ISTEUB, Tunis, November 9th 2017
15	Nejm Dhaher, Faculté d'Urbanisme, ENAU (École Nationale d'Architecture et d'Urbanisme);	ENAU, Tunis, November 13th 2017
16	Zoubeir Mouhli, Architect and Director General of the Association de la Sauvegarde de la Medina (ASM); Consultation of ASM archives under supervision of ASM staff, specifically the Hafsia project documentation;	Dar Lasram, ASM office, Tunis, September 28th 2017 ASM, February 5th–7th 2018
17	Employee of the Institut National du Patrimoine (INP);	INP, Tunis, September 27th 2017
18	Public relations officer of Office National de l'Artisanat Tunisien (ONAT);	ONAT, Tunis, September 25th 2017
19	Former fripe importer (licensed in 1960s, now retired), whose son continues to operate in the fripe import/wholesale business;	Private house in Tunis suburb, May 24th 2019
20	Wholesaler operating (officially) in Sfax, and (unofficially) in all of Tunisia, also managing unlicensed imports since 2012 (*not recorded*);	Office, warehouse and private houses, Sfax, July 6th 2018
21	Public relations officer in the Ministry of Commerce; Official charged with the "fripe file" in the Ministry of Commerce;	Ministry of Commerce, Tunis, May 21st 2018 Ministry of Commerce, Tunis, August 5th 2018
22	Néjib Karafi, Director General of the Fédération Tunisienne du Textile et de l'Habillement (FTTH)	FTTH Office, Tunis, June 19th 2018
23	Member of the presidential reform committee of the fripe sector, official in the Ministry of Social Affairs;	Ministry of Social Affairs, Tunis, April 25th 2018
24	Technical staff member involved in reform process of the fripe file;	Ministry of Commerce, Tunis, May 21st 2019
25	Senior official charged with the "fripe file" in the Ministry of Industry; Senior official in charge of *"industries de l'habillement"* (textile industry);	Ministry of Industry, Tunis, May 21st 2018 Ministry of Industry, Tunis, May 22nd 2018
26	Hamdi Kannou, President of the CONECT (Confédération des Entreprises Citoyennes de Tunisie) interprofessional grouping representing the fripe sector;	CONECT Office, Tunis
27	Fethi Bezrati, President of the Chambre Nationale des Importateurs, Exportateurs et Transformateurs de la friperie UTICA (Union Tunisienne des Industries, du Commerce et de l'Artisanat);	UTICA Office, Tunis, June 26th 2018
28	Sahbi Maalaoui, President of the Chambre Nationale des Commerçants Grossistes de Friperie	UTICA Office, Tunis, July 24th 2018

	UTICA (Union Tunisienne des Industries, du Commerce et de l'Artisanat);	
29	Senior official in the Ministry of Finance and member of the presidential reform committee for the fripe sector;	Ministry of Finance, Tunis, April 25th 2018
30	Urbanist/urban planner and researcher formerly working with the ASM *(Association de la Sauvegarde de la Medina)*, with a central role in the Hafsia renewal project;	Private planning Office, Tunis, May 10th 2018
31	Faika Bejaoui, one of the architects involved in the Hafsia renewal project on behalf of the *Association de la Sauvegarde de la Medina* (ASM);	Dar Lasram, Office of ASM, Tunis, on June 15th 2018
32	(Retired) urban planner/architect involved in the elaboration of *Cité Ibn Khaldoun;*	Private house, Tunis, February 18th 2018;
33	Urban planner/architect involved in the Hafsia renovation project during the second phase (1980s–1990s) and the evaluation committee in the 1990s;	Coffeeshop, La Marsa, Tunis, May 21st 2019
34	Resident of Menzah VIII, 30 year old marketing specialist, who grew up in a middle-class household in *Ibn Khaldoun*;	Coffeeshop in city centre, then Ibn Khaldoun, June 23rd 2019
35	Head of the textile chamber in UGTT (Tunisian General Trade Union); Employee of the UGTT textile chamber, in charge of factory inspections	UGTT, Tunis, August 17th 2017 UGTT, Tunis, April 26th 2018
36	Member of the Municipal Council (Délégation Spéciale) of Tunis (contacted specifically to comment on the market clearance/relocation campaign);	Tunis municipality, Tunis, August 30th 2017
37	Employees of *Direction des Marchés Municipaux* (for subsequent interviews, see Annex II/Chapter IV)	Municipal market authority, Central Market of Tunis, November 13th 2017
38	Prominent radio presenter in *Radio Tunisie*/Radio Nationale Tunisienne (Tunisian National Radio)	Studio of Tunisian National Radio, Lafayette, Tunis, May 15th 2018
39	Importer/fripe sorting factory owner in Tunis; Subsequent interview with factory supervisor and fripe sorting workers (*not recorded*)*;*	Sorting Factory, North-Eastern periphery of Tunis/Mornaguia, October 5th 2018
40	Bilel Kammoun, fripe wholesaler in Sfax and owner of the fripe chain store *Kilostore;*	Two chain stores and warehouse, Sfax, July 3rd and 4th 2018
41	Tunisian-French owner of commercial collection company in Paris, active in import/export-business with fripe from and to Tunisia since 2003;	Coffeeshop, Paris, November 18th 2017; Coffeeshop, Tunis, July 26th 2018; Phone conversation, December 18th 2020
42	Salah Barka, Tunisian fashion designer;	Coffeeshop, Tunis, October 5th 2017;

Appendix II

KEY INTERLOCUTORS FEATURED IN THE THESIS

Selected key interlocutors cited in footnotes to the main text are listed. The table aims to provide an insight into the ethnographic methods underpinning the accounts constructed in Ch. II-V, but remains non-exhaustive. All names are anonymised to respect confidentiality and none of the interlocutors is visible in any of the photo material reproduced in the thesis.

	Name (role, place)	Research engagements	Time period
Chapter II			
1.	Najib (fripier/fripe stall owner, Hafsia)	First meeting at stall space in the Hafsia (introduced by Ahmed); repeated visits and conversations at the stall; recorded life history interview in Hafsia cafe after market closing hours (part I); recorded life history interview at stall space after closing hours (part II); regular follow-up visits at the Hafsia stall space (Najib's stall burnt down in the May 2020 fire).	November 4th 2017 – December 19th 2020
2.	Hamadi and his son Ahmed (fripiers/fripe shopkeepers, Hafsia)	Chance encounter with Ahmed in fripe shop in the Hafsia; repeated visits and conversations; meeting with Hamadi in shop (arranged by Ahmed); recorded life history interview with Hamadi (part I and part II) in shop; recorded life history interview with Hamadi (part III) in private home in Bardo; Private invitation in private home in Bardo and follow-up visits of Ahmed in fripe shop (Hamadi can no longer travel the long distance to the shop space).	November 2nd 2017 – December 19th 2020
3.	Adel (fripier/fripe stall owner and itinerant trader, Ibn Khaldoun)	Chance encounter in the lower part of the Ibn Khaldoun fripe market; recurrent meetings in the Ibn Khaldoun market; tour of the upper fripe market; recorded life history interview (with Slim) at the market stalls in Ibn Khaldoun on Sunday (part I); two go-alongs to weekly souk of Ezzahra and Rades (with two young assistants); recorded life history interview (with Slim) in cafe in upper part of Ibn Khaldoun, with subsequent tour through the cite/neighbourhood; meeting and conversation with Adel's mother in private home (recorded as part of life history interview).	December 12th 2017 – March 4th 2019
4.	Slim (fripier/fripe stall owner and itinerant trader, Ibn Khaldoun)	First meeting in the lower part of the Ibn Khaldoun market (introduced by Adel); recorded life history interview (with Adel) at the market stalls in Ibn Khaldoun on Sunday (part I); recorded life history interview (with Adel) in cafe in upper part of Ibn Khaldoun, with subsequent tour through the cite/neighbourhood.	April 19th 2018 – March 4th 2019
Chapter III			
5.	Ahmed and different friends (fripe market customers)	Encounter with Ahmed in Fethi's fripe sneaker boutique (introduced by Fethi), conversation; two go-alongs with Ahmed and his friends, first to bale opening in sneaker street and second to sneaker shop street in El Aouina.	December 2nd 2017 – May 19th 2018
6.	Safa (faraza/sorting worker, SITEX)	First meeting in the sorting factory (introduced by factory supervisor); shadowing of working practices in the factory on two separate working days (second time exclusively between shoe section and beit el-krema); two go-alongs between factory and home on urban periphery (commute in	October 5th 2018 – November 22nd 2020

		both directions); participant observation in home resale on two Saturdays; follow-up visit in private home.	
7.	Aymen and Ibrahim (wholesalers/ warehouse- and showroom-owners, Zahrouni)	First meeting in Zahrouni and tour of showroom/ warehouses (introduced by Nessima); Situated shadowing of working practices in wholesale quarter with each of them for one half day; Two follow-up visits over subsequent months; one afternoon spent following sales in Ibrahim's showroom.	May 21st 2018 – February 15th 2019
8.	Hassan (transporter, Zahrouni)	Chance encounter in Bab El-Falla marketplace and on-site conversation; first (accompanied) go-along between Zahrouni and Bab El-Falla; then four all-day go-alongs (alone) between Zahrouni and diverse marketplaces of Tunis; on two later occasions, go-alongs for fripe deliveries (from large wholesalers to smaller wholesalers) outside the capital (to Bizerte, Nabeul); Repeated meetings, including follow-up meetings, in cafes in inner-city marketplaces, mainly the Hafsia.	October 27th 2017 – October 14th 2020
9.	Fethi and Montassar (fripiers, Bab El-Falla)	Chance encounter in Bab El-Falla and repeated on-site visits and conversations in shoe shop; observation of preparation and routines of bale opening on Tuesday and Saturday in shoe shop; one week of daily observations and conversations, including shadowing of Montassar's purchases in Zahrouni, distribution relations in and around Bab el-Falla, to comprehend weekly shop routines; regular follow-up visits of Fethi in shoe shop (Montassar stopped working with Fethi after a dispute in December 2019).	October 21st 2017 – December 18th 2020
Chapter IV			
10.	Kamel (fripier/fripe shopkeeper, Rue du Liban)	Chance encounter with Kamel in fripe shop in Rue du Liban; regular visits in shop space, usually after market closing hours (on commutes/grocery shopping route); recorded interview in front of shop after market closing hours (history of market emergence); shadowing of working routines on two separate bale opening days (with Kamel's son and wife); visit in private home/introduction of family, and two follow-up visits.	September 2nd 2017 – December 17th 2020
11.	Bilel (nassab/street vendor, Rue du Liban)	Recurrent meetings with Bilel in Nessima's shop space (introduced by Nessima); two go-alongs for purchases in Zahrouni (with Nessima); meetings and conversations in Rue du Liban; shadowing of Bilel's working routines for two half days, including before and after market opening/closing hours to comprehend Bilel's supply and distribution system.	May 3rd 2018 – October 23rd 2018
12.	Mohamed (fripe reseller, Rue du Liban)	Meeting with Mohamed in Kamel's shop (introduced by Kamel); regular visits of Mohamed in sale position on market peripheries; shadowing of vending practices and policing of market entrance on two consecutive days; meeting with Mohamed on Monday morning for leftover collection in market and subsequent distribution to faraza in a garage outside the market.	April 23rd 2018 – September 24th 2018
13.	Wassim (fripier/fripe shopkeeper, Hafsia and then Rue du Liban)	Meeting in the Hafsia fripe market (introduced by fellow traders for specialization in fur products); repeated conversations in shop; accompanied move from the Hafsia to Rue du Liban in December 2018; follow-up visits in the new shop in Rue du Liban.	September 27th 2018 – December 3rd 2019

14.	Nessima (fripe shopkeeper, Avenue de Londres)	Meeting in Nessima's shop space in Avenue de Londres (introduced by a student subletting a room in her house); recurrent visits and conversations in her shop space; two go-alongs for fripe purchases in Zahrouni; over three months, assisting Nessima in the shop at least twice a week during the afternoon (sorting, storage clearance, display, customer advice); recurrent follow-up visits (Nessima closed her shop in June 2019 due to caring responsibilities in her family).	October 12th 2017 – May 21st 2019
15.	Mr. S. and Mr. M. (employees of the Municipal Market Authority)	Chance encounter with Mr. S. in the Sidi El Bechir relocation site for street vendors; formal interview with Mr. S. in the municipal market authority, joined by Mr. M.; repeated visits in the market authority; two go-alongs to Rue du Liban relocation site and one go-along to El Kherba and Sidi El Bechir market relocation site each; follow-up visits in the market authority (Mr. S. retired from his position in December 2018 due to health problems).	November 5th 2017 – February 22nd 2019
16.	Mariam (resident of Rue d'Atlas/ Rue du Liban, and fripe customer)	Chance encounter with Mariam in the Rue du Liban fripe market; invitation to private home and conversation with Mariam and her two daughters about neighbourhood changes; repeated follow-up visits to private home.	October 27th 2017 – December 15th 2020
Chapter V			
17.	Yasmina and Wiem ((upper middle-class) customers, Hayy Ennasr)	Meeting with Yasmina in coffee shop in Hayy Ennasr (introduced by Tunisian researcher/colleague); two gatherings, one in Yasmina's and one in Wiem's house (alongside other female friends) with subsequent go-along to bale opening in Bab El-Falla and Menzah VIII; meeting with Wiem for brunch and subsequent go-along to bale opening in Bousalsala.	May 12th 2018 – February 9th 2019
18.	Heba, her daughter Haifa, and different female members of her family ((lower middle-class) customers, Kabaria)	Meeting with Heba and Haifa in their private home in Kabaria (introduced by the mother of a friend, her next-door neighbour); three go-alongs with Heba, Haifa and different female members of her family to bale openings, one starting from private home in Kabaria to Hayy Ezzouhour, one starting in Bab-El Falla, and one in Hayy El Khadra; follow-up Sunday lunch invitation in private home of Heba and Haifa in Kabaria.	May 19th 2018 – February 16th 2020
19.	Mouin (fripier/ fripe shopkeeper, Bab El-Falla) and Yassine (cousin and shop assistant)	Chance encounter in Bab El-Falla and repeated on-site visits and conversations in clothes shop; participant observation (as customer) in repeated bale openings with both; observation during pre-inspection of bale for 'special customers'; repeated follow-up visits in the market.	October 3rd 2017 – November 14th 2020
20.	Amine (fripier/ fripe stall owner, Bab El-Falla)	Chance encounter in Bab El-Falla and repeated on-site visits and conversations at toy stall; participant observation (as customer) in repeated bale openings; one go-along for purchases in Sidi Hassine (inofficial warehouse); repeated follow-up visits in the market.	October 7th 2017 – November 14th 2020
21.	Hakim /fripier/ fripe shopkeeper, Bab El Falla)	Meeting with Hakim in Bab El-Falla cafe (introduced by Amine); subsequent conversations in specialized fripe accessory shop; go-along to warehouse purchase in Zahrouni; observation during consecutive bale openings.	January 24th 2018 – December 18th 2018

Appendix III

ARCHIVAL MATERIALS CITED

Archival materials cited in footnotes to the main text of Chapter I and IV are listed. All archival materials were consulted by the author in the Tunisian National Archives in Tunis in 2018.

N°	Title of document and date	Archive location	Date of consultation
Chapter I			
1	« Inventaires de fripe militaire », Inventories from warehouses in El-Aouina and Djebel Djelloud, from 1946-1948	Série SG 2, carton 151bis, numéro du dossier 9, n° de pièces: 81, Archives Nationales de la Tunisie (Régence de Tunis/Protectorat Français)	Accessed, August 13 th – 17 th 2018
2	« Production et Commerce de Textiles », 1946	Série SG2, Carton 175, Dossier 15, n° de pièces 56, Archives Nationales de la Tunisie (Régence de Tunis/Protectorat Français)	Accessed, August 27th – 31st 2018
3	« Lettre du Résident Général de France à Tunis au Secrétaire Général du Gouvernement en France », 21st of March 1946	Série SG2, Carton 175, Dossier 15, n° de pièces 56, Archives Nationales de la Tunisie (Régence de Tunis/Protectorat Français)	Accessed, August 27th – 31st 2018
4	« Ravitaillement général de la Tunisie en textiles et tissus », 1944	Série SG 2, carton 151bis, numéro du dossier 9, n° de pièces: 81, Archives Nationales de la Tunisie (Régence de Tunis/Protectorat Français)	Accessed, August 13th. – .17th 2018
5	« Arrêt du 5 août 1943 créant un Office de la Récupération » (J.O.T. 7 août 1943, p. 481) signed by the Directeur de l'Economie Générale, "doté de la personnalité civile, chargé de la récuperation industrielle, de la liquidation et de l'utilisation des produits récupérés"	Série SG2, Carton 175, Dossier 17, n° de pièces 56, Archives Nationales de la Tunisie (Régence de Tunis/Protectorat Français)	Accessed, August 20th – 24th 2018
6	« Notes et correspondances avec le Directeur de l'économie générale, le Chef de l'Office de la Récupération relatives à la récupération du surplus américain en textiles, cuirs, habillement, mobiliers et matériel de génie civil ainsi que la répartition de ces produits en faveur des associations et des entreprises publiques », 1945–1947	Série SG3, Carton 26, Dossier 1, n° de pièces 72, Archives Nationales de la Tunisie (Régence de Tunis/Protectorat Français)	Accessed, September 3rd – 7th 2018
7	« Répartition et distribution de la friperie américaine et de tissus sur tickets de consommation », 1944	Série SG2, Carton 152, Dossier 8, n° de pièces: 17; Archives Nationales de la Tunisie (Régence	Accessed, August 27th – 31st 2018

		de Tunis/Protectorat Français)	
8	« Correspondances entre l'inspecteur général du ravitaillement tunisien et le secrétaire général du ravitaillement tunisien et le secrétaire général du gouvernement tunisien relatives au sujet du trafic de bons de friperie américaine » 1944–1947	Série SG4, Carton 77, Dossier 3, n° de pièces: 82; Archives Nationales de la Tunisie (Régence de Tunis/Protectorat Français)	Accessed, August 27th – 31st 2018
9	« Lettre de l'Inspecteur Général du Ravitaillement Tunisien au Directeur de l'Économie Générale », 1945	Série SG2, Carton 175, Dossier 15, n° de pièces 56, Archives Nationales de la Tunisie (Régence de Tunis/Protectorat Français)	Accessed, August 20th – 24th 2018
10	« Rapport de l'Inspecteur général des services administratifs », 1945	Série SG2, Carton 175, Dossier 15, n° de pièces 56, Archives Nationales de la Tunisie (Régence de Tunis/Protectorat Français)	Accessed, August 20th – 24th 2018
Chapter IV			
11	« Correspondances, textes législatifs et rapports concernant la réglementation du colportage dans la commune de Tunis », 1922–1946	Série M5, Carton 11, Dossier 504, n° de pièces: 244, Archives Nationales de la Tunisie (Régence de Tunis/ Protectorat Français)	Accessed, September 10th – 14th 2018
12	« Correspondances et textes législatifs réglementant le stationnement, le colportage et la vente des denrées et marchandises sur la voie publique dans la commune de Tunis », 1890–1956	Série M5, Carton 11, Dossier 676, n° de pieces 171, Archives Nationales de la Tunisie (Régence de Tunis/ Protectorat Français)	Accessed, September 10th – 14th 2018
13	« Lettre du Vice-président de la Municipalité de Tunis au Directeur Général de l'Intérieur concernant le problème du colportage et l'échec de la planification des marchés municipaux », August 24th 1922 (by the vice president of the Municipality of Tunis to the Directeur Général de l'Intérieur concerning the problem of unregulated street trading and the failure of municipal markets)	Série M5, Carton 11, Dossier 504, n° de pièces: 244, Archives Nationales de la Tunisie (Régence de Tunis/ Protectorat Français)	Accessed, September 10th – 14th 2018

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