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## The Impact of Shifts in Field Opportunity Structure on The Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia (2011)

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### Abstract

#### Extended Abstract:

The Jasmine Revolution of 2011 marked a turning point not only in Tunisian history but also in the broader socio-political transformations across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. This paper revisits the event through the lens of the "Field Opportunity Structure," a conceptual framework that synthesizes classical political opportunity theory with Bourdieu's notions of social fields and various forms of capital. The objective is to analyze the revolution in a manner that transcends conventional political interpretations and considers cultural and symbolic dimensions.

The central hypothesis asserts that shifts in the field opportunity structure allowed marginalized social actors to claim space in Tunisia's media and artistic land-

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scapes, thereby playing a significant role in the emergence and momentum of the Jasmine Revolution. By employing a qualitative content analysis alongside descriptive data, this study demonstrates how cultural fields operated as crucial arenas of contestation and mobilization.

One of the most decisive changes observed during the pre-revolutionary period involved the democratization of media through advances in communication technology. Internet proliferation and social media platforms enabled citizens to circumvent state-controlled information channels and disseminate alternative narratives. This access empowered previously voiceless groups to participate more fully in public discourse, creating a decentralized model of political expression.

Parallel transformations occurred within the artistic field. Traditional forms of artistic production gradually gave way to more experimental and socially resonant works. In music, genres began to reflect grassroots realities; in cinema, emerging filmmakers moved away from the dominant national styles and tackled themes of repression and identity. Wall art, particularly graffiti, emerged as a raw medium of sociopolitical commentary, often addressing taboo subjects.

The confluence of these developments facilitated an expansion of symbolic capital among disenfranchised youth and artists, repositioning them as influential agents within the Tunisian cultural sphere. These dynamics did not unfold in isolation but formed part of a larger realignment across intersecting fields—media, art, and civil society—each undergoing its own redefinition of power relations.

By integrating field theory into the study of social movements, the paper advances a holistic model for understanding collective action. Traditional frameworks, such as resource mobilization and political process theory, often fall short in explaining the deeper cultural origins and symbolic drivers behind revolutions like that of Tunisia. Field opportunity structure offers a corrective by emphasizing multi-field competition and the strategic accumulation of capital.

This perspective underscores the importance of cultural and symbolic contestation in revolutionary settings. It reveals that revolutions are not merely political eruptions but processes grounded in everyday struggles over meaning, representation, and legitimacy. Such insights demand a broader theoretic

cal lens—one that captures the complexity and multidimensionality of social movements in the MENA region.

The findings suggest that the Jasmine Revolution should be understood not only as a rupture in Tunisia's political system but as a foundational shift in its cultural and social fabric. The transformation in field dynamics enabled new repertoires of resistance and redefined what it meant to be a political subject within Tunisian society. These shifts had lasting implications for artistic expression, media ecosystems, and civic engagement.

Ultimately, this study argues for the adoption of more integrative and dynamic frameworks in the analysis of social movements. Recognizing revolutions as field-wide shifts—involving diverse arenas of contestation—allows researchers to move beyond deterministic models and engage with the nuanced realities shaping collective action. The Jasmine Revolution, when viewed through this prism, emerges not only as a catalyst for democratization but also as a crucible for cultural reinvention.

**Key words:** Tunisian revolution, Field Opportunity Structure, Social movements, North Africa.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in conducting this research study.