
Mapping votes and representing power: Spatio-temporal and multiscalar analysis of electoral results in Tunisia between 2011 and 2018.

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Keywords: Electoral geography, Spatio-temporal mapping, Tunisia

Abstract:

Tunisia has held four elections (legislative 2011 and 2014, presidential 2014 and local 2018) since the 2011 Revolution. The last municipal elections held on May 6, 2018 were the first free and fair local elections in the country's history so far. The political dynamics at play after 2011 are far from being settled. In fact, the first National Constituent Assembly's election in October 2011 knew a large advance of Ennahda Islamist Party. With the 2014 legislative elections we come to witness the advent of a new political party: Nidaa Tounes. However, in the last local elections the political scene was marked by the breakthrough of many independent lists. Along with the ever decreasing voters participation. It reached only 35.6% of registered voters in 2018 which is hardly half the turnout in 2014.

This paper aims to use cartographic illustration at the 'Imada' level, the smallest administrative scale in Tunisia to provide a local spatial evidence of voting patterns in Tunisia. To my knowledge, this is the first attempt to map electoral results at such a fine scale in the Tunisian political analysis context.

For the purpose of this study, a time-series electoral GIS-based database was designed. The data used was mainly provided by the Independent Higher Election Authority (ISIE). The electoral results are first produced at the scale of polling stations which is the finest scale. They are then aggregated into vote centers which in turn are aggregated into sectors or 'Imadas'. Imadas are the building blocks of higher territorial levels such as municipalities, delegations, and governorates (regions). The Imada-level electoral mapping and analysis will be applied to 2011, 2014 and 2018 elections results.

The analysis will be applied to two levels : First, the country-level where we will analyse at one and the same time the electoral geography of the two major political parties, i.e. Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes as well as. The dispersion of votes and the turnout evolution. Secondly, we will explore the impact of redistricting and gerrymandering on local votes. Two case studies will be juxtaposed: the stable region of Tunis which underwent no communal redistricting at all as opposed to the region of Kasserine which was completely restructured.