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## Sustainable representation of women through gender quotas: A decade's experience in Morocco

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## SYNOPSIS

This article surveys the adoption and implementation of gender quota provisions in the three Moroccan parliamentary elections, 2002, 2007 and 2011, following the first adoption of gender quotas. Despite being effective in bringing a substantial number of women into the parliament, the question should be asked, can gender quotas, once introduced, lead to more sustainable political representation for women? By introducing the concept of *sustainable representation*, defined as a durable, substantial political representation of women, this article points to the importance of studying how gender quotas may or may not alter some of the barriers, which prevents women's equal participation and representation. This study of the nomination and election of women through three subsequent elections in Morocco since the adoption of gender quotas, traces the evolution of the reserved seat system from a controversial and fragile system set by an 'honorary agreement' to an expanded and finally legalized system. The analysis suggests that the political uprising in the neighboring countries during 2010–11 created a political transitional atmosphere for the reform of the Moroccan constitution, and provided an opportunity for institutionalizing the principle of gender equality in the 2011 constitution. In exploring the link between the reserved seat system and having women elected in the general district seats in Moroccan elections, the article scrutinizes the widespread supposition in the quota literature that quotas in the form of reserved seats tend to block the nomination of women to constituency seats, thus constituting a kind of glass ceiling.

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### Introduction

Considerable attention has been devoted to documenting the types of gender quotas which have emerged around the world (e.g., Dahlerup, 2006; [Global Database of Gender Quotas](#), 2013) and to explaining why they were adopted (e.g., Caul, 2001; Krook, 2006, 2009), yet in most recent research the focus has changed to scrutinizing the processes and efficiency of quota *implementation* (Franceschet, Krook, & Piscopo, 2012). It has been pointed out that much of the discussion for or against gender quotas rests on predictions about what will happen if gender quotas are adopted. It is, however, important to move from sheer predictions to

scrutinizing the many actual results (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2010; Franceschet et al., 2012). Morocco is an interesting case to study, and can throw some new light on how quotas in the form of reserved seats work – for good and worse – because since 2002 the country has reserved a relatively large number of seats for women in parliament elected on one national list composed of only women candidates. In general, by the use of electoral gender quotas, women's political representation has recently increased in the Arab region, leaving the Pacific region behind at the bottom of the world ranking order (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2013).

Historically, reserved seats have for long been used to guarantee a certain representation of national minorities, yet, more recently, the system has been applied to women as a group in need of representation. Among the more than sixty countries which by the end of 2012 had adopted gender

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quotas for their parliamentary elections by law or in their constitution, almost twenty have done so in the form of reserved seats, e.g. electoral provisions guaranteeing in advance a certain number of seats for women (see [www.quotaproject.org](http://www.quotaproject.org)). Increasingly, reserved-seat gender quotas are based on competitive election between women, not as was common earlier on appointment. Thus we see a new electoral phenomenon around the world, as for instance in India and Bangladesh (at the local level) and in Uganda, Rwanda and Morocco (at local and national level) in the form of specific public elections based on competition between women candidates only, however, with variation in degree of attachment to political parties (Dahlerup, 2007, 2008).

Critics argue, however, that the use of reserved seats may be a way to appease, and ultimately sideline, women (Norris, 2006). Being elected through this route does not necessarily mean that women are given independent decision-making power or gain equal status as elected members, it is argued. Where women members are nominated to reserved seats by their parties, they lack an independent electoral or organizational base, and this may reinforce a continuous dependence of women on quota provisions (Tinker, 2004). Moreover, opponents of gender quotas predict that quotas will come to constitute a *glass ceiling*, which tend to prevent women from being nominated and elected beyond the quota requirement or to non-reserved seats (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2010). On the other hand, one may argue that in strong patriarchal societies reserved seats may be the only realistic route for women into political life.

Instead of arguing for or against quotas as reserved seats, we may now begin to analyze actual experiences, asking if an actual reserved seat system have proved to be an entrance for women into a patriarchal political system with lasting effects or just a dead-end for women? In making such analyses, one should take into consideration, that in all strong party systems not only female, but also male politicians are strongly dependent on the party for their nomination and seat, and are bound by the party line. In this article we look at the adoption and implementation of electoral gender quotas in Morocco – a case which can speak to many of these questions.

Work has been done on the effectiveness of election law quotas (Franceschet et al., 2012; Htun, 2004; Jones, 2004), but we need more research paying attention to the factors and political context which shape the compliance or the breach of the state to the promotion of gender equality through the adoption of quotas or other affirmative action measures. Such attention seems particularly merited because quotas in general seem to work best when there are political conditions and contexts which encourage gender equality, and more technically, when the design of the quota system matches the electoral system in place. Even some legally enforced quota regulations have only had mixed success in increasing women's representation in legislatures (Dahlerup, 2006).

In this article we introduce the concept of *sustainable representation* of women in politics, which we define as a durable, substantial numerical political representation of women, freed of the risk of immediate major backlash. The idea is to reintroduce a broader perspective in quota implementation research. Can gender quotas lead to durable

changes in women's descriptive representation – and under what circumstances? The ultimate test is of course, if the gains will remain, even if the quota regulations were to be removed in the future.<sup>1</sup> This focus is especially interesting for the many recent examples of so-called *fast-track* change countries, i.e. countries with a sudden increase or leap in women's political representation, usually as an effect of quota adoption. In contrast to the typical *incremental track* change of the old democracies, fast track changes in this field are not based on previous, longitudinal and robust changes in women's position in education, on the labor market and in civil society in general (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2005; Dahlerup & Leyenaar, in press). Can gender quotas contribute to the removal of (some of) those barriers, institutional, discursive or in terms of resources, which have blocked women's entrance into political life? Under what circumstances can quotas lead to continuous change?

This article focuses on the adoption of gender quotas in Morocco, and the implementation of the quota provisions. Ideally, a long-term perspective of say 20–30 years would have been preferable, and consequently, this article's ten year perspective can only look at certain indicators of sustainability. Firstly, did the Moroccan reserved seat system result in a substantial and durable numerical representation of women? Special emphasis will be placed on the link between women being elected on the reserved seats and on the regular district seats open to both sexes. Thus, secondly, the article scrutinizes whether the reserved seat system has become a port of entry for women into the regular district seats, which would imply an increased sustainability? Thirdly, the process of consolidation of the original fragile quota regulation into a statutory mandate system is also studied under the perspective of sustainability.

The section [Introduction of electoral gender quotas in Morocco](#) will analyze the process that leads to the adoption of the first quota regulation in 2002 seen in the context of recent political developments in the country. The role of the King, the political parties and women's mobilizations for change are discussed. As Morocco is still a 'partly free' political system (Freedom House, 2010), there are limits to the information available on the political decision-making processes. The section [The Moroccan type of gender quota regulation: reserved seats on a national list](#) discusses the records of reserved seat quotas in general, followed by scrutinizing the specific Moroccan type of quota regulations. The section [Achievements of the electoral gender quota systems](#) is analyzed through the three subsequent elections, since the adoption of quotas: 2002, 2007 and 2011. The section [Token women?](#) contains a concluding discussion of gender quotas and sustainable representation of women, and the lessons which might be drawn from the Moroccan case.

### Introduction of electoral gender quotas in Morocco

Krook identifies four explanations for quota adoption in current research: women's mobilization, strategic incentives of political elites, consistency with existing political norms and international norms and transnational sharing (Krook, 2009: 19–26). Such an analysis should look at both structural barriers and opportunities and identify key actors and their attempts to change or uphold the existing social organization.

In 1979, the kingdom of Morocco ratified CEDAW with reservations on the articles regarding personal status, but not with respect to political rights. Nonetheless, the granting of these political rights and the ratification of CEDAW had not been accompanied by mechanisms to make it possible for women to gain real access to elective institutions, and not a single woman was elected to the parliament until the 1993 and 1997 elections, each of which resulted in two women elected to the House of Representatives.

Many factors contributed to the opening of political life to women (Darhour, 2012). In Morocco, the king remains the center of power. Some reforms were carried out during the 1990s, however, the new king, Mohammed VI, who in 1999 succeeded his father, Hassan II, was more open to political and social reforms and made some concessions around human rights and women's rights (Sater, 2012). The international pressure for women's political participation provided a chance for women's organizations to raise women's consciousness about the importance of claiming their political rights in the exclusively male-dominated political institutions.

It is noticeable that in Morocco, civil society has been and is relatively strong. Many NGOs are active in civil society. A large number of political parties, about 25, have been allowed to be represented in parliament. Among the extensive number of NGOs, some are allied with specific political parties, while others work independently. In this environment, women's organizations have actively and with some success been pushing for gender equality reforms, most notably the reform of the family laws, the Mudawana reform in 2003, and the quota reforms in 2002 for the national parliament and in 2008 for local governments. It has been suggested that the strong Moroccan women's organizations since the 1970s have played and still play a decisive role in the general democratization and modernization of Moroccan society (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006).

Thus, in Morocco as elsewhere in the world, the main pressure for the adoption of a quota law came from women's organizations. In response to the international development of gender equality conceptions, women's organizations in Morocco constituted one of the inside boosters of women's rights. A "Committee for the Participation of Women in Political Life" was constituted in 1993 in Casablanca. Drawing on experiences of other countries, the committee provided strategies to transcend women's under-representation in elective bodies. In 1997, a coordinating committee of women's associations<sup>2</sup> addressed the political parties and proposed some revisions of the electoral code. They asked the political parties to introduce the proportional representation electoral system, which in general has proved to be more conducive to women's participation. They also lobbied for the adoption of a 20–30% party quota of women. When the political campaign resulted in the election of only two women in the 1997 legislative elections, women's organizations were forced to re-evaluate their activities and get ready to challenge the gatekeepers, namely the political parties, and the structural obstacles impeding women from political participation (Darhour, 2012; Zoglin, 2009). Due to women's mobilization, some political parties adopted a voluntary 10% or 20% party quota of women in their own national political bodies in 1999 and 2001 (Sater, 2007, 2012).

In quota research it has been argued that strategic incentives among the elites can be an important factor behind

reforms (Davidson-Schmich, 2006; Meier, 2004). In the Moroccan political system, the position of the king is crucial, and some of the women's organizations were well-supported by the throne (Sater, 2012). For the new king, Mohammed VI, the inclusion of women could contribute to increased legitimacy of the political institutions and to international acknowledgment in a global atmosphere where gender equality is becoming an increasingly salient issue, and where having more women in politics is increasingly perceived as a sign of being modern and democratic (Dahlerup, 2006). Of the four explanatory factors behind the introduction of quotas mentioned above, only one is not found in the Moroccan case: the attempts to include women in political life was in no way consistent with existing political norms in Morocco, since politics had for so long been perceived as a business for male elites only.

### **The Moroccan type of gender quota regulation: reserved seats on a national list**

In the recent global wave of adopting electoral gender quotas, the following three main quota types can be identified:

- 1) Party candidate quotas, i.e., quota provisions adopted by individual political parties in order to regulate the gender composition of their own candidate lists;
- 2) Legislated candidate quotas, i.e., quota provisions by law, regulating the gender composition of all candidate lists, and binding for all political parties;
- 3) Reserved seats, i.e., a specified number of seats in the assembly are reserved in advance for women or minorities ([www.quotaproject.org](http://www.quotaproject.org)). While the two first mentioned quota systems regulate the gender composition among the candidates, reserved-seat systems target the electees. Thus, reserved seat quotas more certain than candidate quotas will bring the stipulated result.

Reserved seats have long been in use in order to secure the representation of national minorities. Such minorities are often concentrated in specific geographical areas. It has been suggested that reserved seats are for minorities, while candidate quotas are used for women, since women live everywhere in a society (Htun, 2004). Nevertheless, quotas for women/gender in the form of reserved seats are becoming more and more common, now applied in around 20 countries (Global Database of Gender Quotas, 2013). Research has shown that gender quotas in the form of reserved seats is the preferred quota type in South Asia (see Table 1), as, for instance, in India and Bangladesh at the local level, and in the Arab region, where they are in use in Djibouti, Eritrea, Jordan, Iraq, South Sudan, Morocco and Egypt (1979–84 and again in 2010). Reserved-seat systems for women have also been introduced in several Sub-Saharan countries with astonishing results, such as Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya and especially Rwanda (Abou-Zeid, 2006; Dahlerup, 2010). Since 2003, Rwanda has the highest parliamentary representation of women in the world ([www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org)). In most of these countries, a certain number of seats for women are to be elected locally, for instance in each governorate or district, however with many variations (Abou-Zeid, 2006; Dahlerup, 2006; Global Database of Gender Quotas, 2013). In conclusion, reserved-seat

**Table 1**Gender quotas: regional preferences.<sup>a</sup>

Source: Dahlerup, 2006: Table 14.1, p 294, updated.

	<i>Aspirants</i>	<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Reserved seats</i>
<i>Legislated quotas</i>	Primaries (Panama)	Latin America Balkans	Arab World Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa Morocco (2011)
<i>Voluntary Party Quotas</i>	Short lists (UK)	Southern Africa Western Europe	Morocco: party honor agreement (2002–2007)

<sup>a</sup> According to the predominant type of quota in each region.

quota is the most common quota system in use in the Arab region (see Table 1) but still the Moroccan model has its distinguished features.

The adoption of quotas was part of a general constitutional change. Based on Morocco being a multiparty system, women's organizations had demanded a 20–30% quota for women, presumably intending to have such a regulation for all party lists in all districts. Instead the result was the establishment of a special national list of 30 seats reserved for women candidates, to be elected by all voters in one nation-wide constituency. At the same time, the country adopted the proportional representation electoral system, with 95 multi-member electoral districts of 1–5 seats each. The party lists were closed, and both for the women on the national lists and for the district seats, the voters could not alter the rank order of the party. The threshold for a party to be represented in the parliament is 6% for the district seats, 3% for the national seats.

It has been suggested that instead of candidate quotas, male members of parliament supported the idea of adding 30 new seats reserved for women, since this type of gender quota did not threaten the male MPs' (Members of Parliament) own district seats (Sater, 2012: 76–77). This may be true, yet, at the same time the total number of district seats was reduced from 325 to 295.

The devil is in the details when it comes to gender quotas and electoral systems. Too little attention has been paid to how different types of reserved seat systems can have different effects for the elected women's room to maneuver in political life. Probably because of the risk, that the Supreme Court would find a proper quota law unconstitutional, the mechanism of creating the national list of 30 seats in 2002 and reserving them for women was enacted by an 'honorary agreement' between the political parties rather than by a legally enforced mechanism which obliges political parties to comply with the agreement.

#### *National list versus district seats*

To better understand the features of the Moroccan type of reservation which are unique to Morocco, we need to shed light on the responsibilities the national list women are mandated to have and compare it to the normal duties of district list MPs. First, nationally elected women could be considered as being mandated at the national level to represent women's rights and agendas. Their political mandate is not based on a geographical representation or constituency. One female MP considers that "it is rather an advantage to be a national representative because being elected at the national level makes the elected pay their dues

to the Moroccan society in general not only to the restricted interests of a specific constituency" (Darhour, 2012: 173).

Besides, national list women bear direct accountability to their parties, not to the voters. In contrast to district list candidates, mainly those at the top of the lists, who are in direct contact with voters from the same constituency and campaign fiercely to win their trust; national list candidates target the whole Moroccan society. "Observers noted that candidates on the national list typically campaigned with the head of the local district list" (NDI, 2011: 33).

Each political party receives almost the same percentage of the votes in the national list election and in the sum of the district elections. At the polling station, the voters are to mark the preferred party for both the district seats and the national seats, with no personal voting allowed (a closed-list system), and there are no candidate names on the ballot, only party symbols. The almost identical result for the political parties in the two elections indicates that the national all-women election is very closely related to the district elections. A closer look at the design of the ballot paper reveals two almost identical party symbols, placed next to each other, one representing the national list and the other the district list, with no candidate names. Consequently, most voters just cross the symbol of their preferred party two times.

We know very little about the recruitment process of women candidates to the national list. Given the electoral procedure, the key competition for a candidature at the national list takes place before the election: in a competition to be nominated among the top candidates for one's party. The public focus, however, is on the selection of the top district candidate and the following fierce competition between these party representatives during the electoral campaign.

#### **Achievements of the electoral gender quota**

We will now proceed to shed light on the political circumstances under which the Moroccan gender quota provisions have been implemented and analyze its achievements in terms of women's representation in each electoral mandate. Then an analysis of the overall results of three last elections will be tied back to discussing the issue of sustainability.

Table 2 provides an overview over women's representation in the 1997–2011 elections to the Moroccan lower house of parliament. The table shows the introduction in 2002 of the 30 reserved seats, which in 2011 was raised to 60. The overall picture is an increase in women's parliamentary representation from a very low level of only 0.6% in 1997 to 17% in 2011. As shown in Table 2, this growth, however, primarily derives from the national list's reserved seats, whereas only a limited increase has taken place in the number of women elected to

**Table 2**

Overview over women's representation in the 1997–2011 elections to Majliss-annouwab.  
Source: Own calculation based on data from (Darhour, 2008), NDI (2007, 2011).

Election year	1997	2002	2007	2011
<b>No. of women elected to district seats</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Women in % of all district seats</b>	0.6%	1.7%	1.4%	2.3%
	(Out of 325)	(Out of 295)	(Out of 295)	(Out of 305)
<b>National list seats reserved for women</b>	<b>No gender quotas</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Total number of women elected to Majliss-annouwab</b>	2	35	34	67
<b>Total % of women's representation in Majliss-annouwab</b>	0.6%	10.7%	10.5%	17.0%
	(Out of 325)	(Out of 325)	(Out of 325)	(Out of 395)

The numbers in bold letters refer to the number of women elected in both district and national lists.

the general district seats, from 2 to 7 elected women. This feature will be discussed further in the following analysis of the three elections.

*Quota women on the rise: the 2002 election*

The key factor in explaining the dramatic rise in the number of women in Majliss-annouwab from 0.6% in 1997 to 10.7% in 2002, as shown in Table 2, was the adoption of electoral gender quotas. As a result, Morocco improved its position from the 118th in terms of female representation in parliament to the 69th worldwide (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2005). The question at this juncture is: What are the political conditions which pushed for such a change in the 2002 elections?

In the context of the new reign of Mohammed VI, the 2002 legislative elections were supposed to provide proof of a real democratic transition. Political parties promised to lead clean, transparent and regular elections. In particular, it was time to introduce two historical measures that targeted both Moroccan youth and women so as to raise the percentage of the people's participation in elections and to regain their trust in Moroccan politics. The first measure taken was the lowering of the voting age from 20 to 18 years and the second was to adopt the principle of a gender quota of 10% of parliamentary seats.

The 2002 election took place under a revised voting system in which 325 deputies were elected from 91 constituencies. The new rules stated, in Article 1 of the organic law of the House of Representatives, that 10% of the House of Representatives is to be elected in a national list election. The law didn't state that the national list seats should be reserved for women – to avoid falling in the trap of being ruled unconstitutional. Political parties, in response to compelling national and international pressures, as described above, made an "honorary agreement" to reserve the national list 30 seats for female candidates.

In 2002, the distribution of the 30 seats of the national list was the result of competition between 26 parties, which each tried to present a complete list of 30 candidates. Some parties had even added names of men to a theoretically women-reserved list. None of these male "intruders" was elected.

In the 2002 elections, the parties that made up the previous coalition kept a strong majority in the legislature, with the socialist party USFP remaining the largest party with 15% of the popular vote, followed by the nationalist-conservative IP with 14%. The elections saw also the right-wing Islamist party, PJD, making strong gains and over doubling its vote share to

become the third largest party in parliament, having about 13% of the popular vote. The distribution according to party affiliation of the national list female MPs followed the overall party distribution, since both the national seats and the district seats are distributed proportionally between closed party lists, and the voters seem to vote for the same party in the two elections. The five biggest parties had each 5–6 women elected on the national list, see Table 3.

Obviously, the number of women's participation in the legislative house is far from reflecting their demographic weight and their contributions to the productive world, but it was enough to be a good start, opening gradual optimism for Moroccan women (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006). Without the quota system, women's political representation would not have experienced such a substantial increase in the 2002 elections.

*The setbacks in the 2007 elections*

Morocco conducted elections to the lower chamber of the parliament, the House of Representatives, on September 7, 2007. Thirty-three political parties and thirteen independent electoral lists contested the chamber's district (295) and national (30) list seats (Hamzawy, 2007). The turnout for the 2007 election ended with only 37% of eligible voters, which was the lowest turnout in Morocco to date. Prior to the 2007 elections, a consultative process with political parties led to the passage of a new political party law in December 2005,

**Table 3**

Women elected according to party in the national list (2002–2011).  
Source: Data based on Darhour (2008); NDI (2007) and NDI (2011).

Political parties	2002 elections	2007 elections	2011 elections
USFP	5	5	6
IP	4	6	9
PJD	4	6	16
RNI	4	5	8
MP	2	5	5
MNP	2	0	0
UC	2	0	4
PND	2	0	0
PPS	2	3	4
FFD	2	0	0
UD	1	0	0
PAM	0	0	8
Total no. of women elected	30	30	60

which encouraged consolidation among parties and some renewal of leadership through the requirement of increasingly democratic internal processes.

The 2007 parliamentary elections came out with the nationalist – conservatives of the IP in a leading position, with 16% of the popular vote, followed by the conservative Islamist party, PJD, having 14% of the popular vote. The MNP, a conservative-liberal party and the liberal RNI finished third and fourth, with 13% and 12% seats, respectively. The party that formerly held the most seats, the socialist USFP, was reduced to possession of 12% of the popular vote (Hamzawy, 2007). As in 2002, the biggest parties also had the most women elected from the national list. Yet, as it is the case in many parliaments in the world, the parties with most female representatives are not necessarily those with a pro-feminist stance, as it was often pointed out in the Moroccan debate. The 2007 parliamentary elections were seen as a step back for women with only 34 females elected to parliament.

Before the 2007 elections, women's groups had hoped for an expanded national list or other mechanisms at the constituency level to ensure an increase in the number of women representatives above the 10.7%. However, the electoral system maintained the status quo. Frustrated at the slow pace of change, women's civic groups and women within parties demanded special provisions to enable women to be elected or appointed to high-level decision-making positions and promoting the idea that 30% women in an assembly is necessary to provide a critical mass that would allow significant changes in policies and procedures.

#### *Women's gains in the Arab Spring: the 2011 elections*

The Arab Spring uprisings and the vast process of constitutional and legislative reforms<sup>3</sup> which were undertaken by several Arab countries provided a unique opportunity for strengthening equality between women and men (Saïdi, 2012). Following the reform of the Moroccan constitution in October 2011, two laws were adopted containing provisions on the participation of women in political bodies. Law No. 27-11 about the House of Representatives increased the national list reserved for women from 30 to 60 seats out of a total of 395 seats, representing 15%. In addition, and in response to the pressure from the youth under the Arab Spring, 30 seats were to be reserved for persons of male sex under the age of 40 (Article 23), and thus the list of candidates presented by each party at the national level must be composed of 60 women and 30 young men.

Even more importantly, the quota regulations were now given legal status as a law. It is important to notice that the additional seats were added to the total number of seats, thus protecting the seats of the incumbent men. In the same way, no quota regulations for the lists presented at the district level were adopted. For the 305 district seats, the country was now divided into 92 constituencies with 2–6 seats per constituency.

In 2011 elections, the result was the election of a total of 67 women to the House of Representatives, 17%. Morocco now ranks among the top seven countries in the Arab region with respect to women in parliament. Following the democracy movements in the Arab region, countries in the region were encouraged to implement similar special measures. In

Tunisia, a radical 50–50 quota was adopted in 2011 with a demand that all parties alternate male and female candidates in their candidate lists, resulting in the election of 27% women.<sup>4</sup> The new Algerian electoral law of 2012 implies a variable quota of 20–50, depending on the number of seats in the constituency. The result was the election of 32% women, the highest in the Arab world (*Global Database of Gender Quotas, 2013*). In contrast, post-revolutionary Egypt removed its 2010 quota, with the result that the (now dissolved) parliament had only 2% women.

In 2011 seven women were elected in district seats – the highest number ever elected, but still a very low number after two rounds of reserved seats in Moroccan elections. Table 3 shows the distribution of seats on the national list according to parties in the three elections. The largest female representation in the 2011 election, 16 MPs, was won by the winning party, the Islamist PJD party with 27% of the popular vote, followed by the IP with 16%, RNI with 13%, PAM<sup>5</sup> with 12% and the socialist USFP with only 10%. Conservative parties in general tend to return fewer women to parliament than parties to the left. However, the reserved seat system forced all parties to search seriously for women candidates to fill their list for the national list election. As for the district seats, the number of women elected on district seats was only seven to the disappointment of the women's movement, which had expected a spill-over from the national list to the district lists. There are good reasons to look closer at the electoral process.

#### *Women as candidates and elected on the national list versus the district lists in the 2002–2011 elections*

##### *Women as candidates*

In the international debate it is often said that the major reason for women's under-representation is their lack of willingness to stand for election. Just as important, if not more important, however, is the ability and willingness of the political parties to recruit female candidates. It seems that an increased demand for women candidates in itself may create an increased supply, as was the case under the Moroccan reserved seat system. But what about the district lists?

Table 4 gives an overview of the number and share of female candidates for both types of election under the four consecutive elections, 1997–2011. The reserved seats meant a considerable increase in the overall number of women candidates for election, from 69 in 1997 to 1.624 in 2011. So many more women came forward as candidates in a public election, and overall, women made up 22.9% of all candidates in the 2011 election. The number of women candidates for the *national list* seats naturally increased with the rise from 30 to 60 reserved seats. For the *district seats*, the general picture is an increase of women candidates both in absolute numbers and in relation to the also increasing number of male candidates, however, with a stagnation in the 2007 election. This increase, however small in percentage (from 2 to 7%), was not followed by a parallel increase in the number of women elected outside the national list as the following analysis shows.

The problem for women to get a foothold in the districts remained all through the period. While only two women were

**Table 4**

Women's candidature in Majliss-annouab elections, 1977–2011.

Source: Data based on (Darhour, 2008), NDI (2007, 2011).

Election year	Total number of male and female candidates on district lists	Female candidates on district lists		National lists female candidates
		Number of women (% women)	% of district lists headed by a woman	
1997	3288	69 (2%)	N-A <sup>a</sup>	No gender quota
2002	5865	266 (5%)	3%	697
2007	6691	269 (4%)	3%	N-A <sup>a</sup>
2011	7102	484 (7%)	4%	1140

<sup>a</sup> Data on the number of candidates in 2007 elections and percentage of district lists headed by female candidates in 1997 elections are not available.

elected on a district seat in 1997, the number increased to five in 2002, fell again to four in 2007 to rise to seven in the 2011 election (from 0.6%, to 2.3%, see Table 2). The candidates were still overwhelmingly of the male sex. The main problem, however, was that very few district lists were headed by women, only 3–4% as shown in Table 4. With an electoral system in which no party is likely to win more than one seat per electoral district, very few political parties placed women in the head of district electoral list.

#### Lack of transition from national to district lists

As stated in the introduction, opponents of the adoption of electoral gender quotas often predict that quotas will come to constitute a *glass ceiling*, which tend to prevent women from being nominated and elected beyond the quota requirement and to non-reserved seats (Dahlerup and Freidenvall, 2010). At a first glance, the Moroccan case seems to confirm this prediction. The women movement in Morocco had expected that with their new resources based on experience and contacts from parliamentary work, many women from the national lists would later become elected to the district seats, thus breaking the male monopoly here.

Table 5 show all women elected to district seats 2002–11, where they were elected geographically, for which party and lastly if they had any previous parliamentary experience, either from national list or district lists.

In 2002, as shown in Table 5, surprisingly, the biggest party, the socialist USFP, in spite of its strong ties to the women's movement, did not elect a single woman among its district seat MPs, whereas two women were placed in winning seats by IP and PJD, respectively. None of the five women elected to district seats had previous experience as members of parliament, a natural consequence that few women were elected earlier.

In 2007, the hope was that the reserved seats adopted in 2002 would encourage women's entry into the regular district seats. But the elections did not further women's political participation, with limited increases in the number of women nominated on district lists and one less seat on the district lists being won by women candidates. The distribution of female representation across parties (Table 5) was shared among the biggest parties in Morocco, with the exception of the Islamist party, PJD, which had no women elected. In 2007 election two out of the elected four district seat women MPs had a previous parliamentary experience, being reelected to the same district seat which they won in 2002 (Table 5). The other two women have never been elected before and run for the first time for a district seat. No women elected on the national list in 2002 won a district seat in 2007. Because of lack of data on the quota women who ran as candidates in district lists, it is possible to conclude that none of the political parties had placed a woman elected on the national

**Table 5**

Women representatives elected to district seats in the 2002–2010 elections.

Source: Data based on the official website of Majliss-annouab <http://www.parlement.ma>.

Election year	Name	Geographical representation	Party	Parliamentary experience
<b>2002</b>	Badou Yasmina	Grand Casablanca	IP	No
	Belahcen Fatna	Tanger-Tétouan	PJD	No
	Elbakali Kassimi Aziza	Grand Casablanca	PJD	No
	Jadli Hafida	Marrakech Tensift-Al Haouz	IP	No
<b>2007</b>	Khieil Fatna	Gharb-Chrarda-Bni Hssen	MNP	No
	Ayadi Fatiha	Kelaat Sraghna	PAM	No
	Badou Yasmina <sup>a</sup>	Casablanca	IP	Elected in Casablanca district in 2002
	Jbabdi Latifa <sup>b</sup>	Rabat	USFP	No
<b>2010</b>	Khieil Fatna	Kenitra	MNP	Elected in Gharb-Chrarda district in 2002
	Afif Jamila	Marrakech	PAM	No
	Badou Yasmina	Casablanca Anfa	IP	Elected in Casablanca in 2002 and 2007
	Boulaich Elhajraoui Souad	Fahs Anjra	PJD	No
	Chaker Mtalsi Saida	Tanger Asila	RNI	No
	Elmansouri Fatimazahra	Marrakech	PAM	No
	Toutou Mbarka	Jrada	PAM	No
Zahidi Itimad <sup>c</sup>	Skhirat Tmara	PJD	No	

<sup>a</sup> She is the Ex-Minister of Health in the cabinet of Abbas El Fassi between 2007 and 2012.

<sup>b</sup> She is a leading feminist in the Moroccan women's movement.

<sup>c</sup> She is 28 years old, and the youngest female MP.

list in 2002 in a winnable position and district in the election of 2007. It is noticeable that one well-known and widely respected woman from the women's movement, *Latifa Jbadi*, was elected on a district seat for the socialist party, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5 shows a small increase in the number of women elected in district lists; from 4 (1.4%) to 7 women elected (2.3%). Only one woman MP, Yasmina Badou from the IP party, had previous parliamentary experience, while the other six were newcomers. A closer look reveals that again no women previously elected on the national quota list were among those elected to a district seat in the 2011 election.

A striking number that can be provided here is that in the last three legislative elections, 7 national list MPs were reelected three times and 11 national list MPs were elected twice. As a result to this, a discussion among civil society organizations over the best way that would lead to a constant renewal of the actual political female elite is by specifying that no one elected on the national list should be allowed to run for a second time. There is a strong belief that aspirant women running for a second or a third mandate have more chances to invest their previous parliamentary experience in being re-elected in district seats especially because they are supposed to have more influence and better contacts within their parties.<sup>5</sup>

In summing up, no women have made it from the national list to election onto a district seat, at least so far. But can we conclude that more women would have been elected to the district seats, if no seats had been reserved for women at the national list, thus making the national list into an invisible *glass ceiling* for women? This will be discussed further in the conclusion.

### Token women?

That 'quota women' are just *tokens* is a widespread assumption in the quota literature (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2010: 409–10). Tripp et al. (2006: 124) state that many African critiques of quotas, even among feminists, believe that quotas will lead to tokenism and become yet another mechanism in the service of patronage politics. Unfortunately, 'token' is not a well-defined concept, but covers different assumption that women elected under a quota system will not be independent actors (or, not sufficiently 'feminist' actors), but mainly depend on the ruler or party leadership. It is, however, important to note that in a one party state or states with strong parties and strict party discipline, not only the women MPs, but also male members of parliament are heavily dependent on the leaders for their seat and restricted in their political actions.

Further, 'token' quota women are assumed to have limited political influence. Yet, in the Moroccan case, two nationally elected women were nominated as ministers: (1) Nezha Skalli, from the PPS won in 2002 a national seat and in 2007 she became minister of Solidarity, Women, Family and Social Development, and (2) Basima Hakkaoui, from the PJD, was quota elected in 2002 and 2007 and she became minister of the same ministry of Solidarity, Women, Family and Social Development. With the question of tokenism the discussion is moved from the descriptive to substantial representation of

women, from the numbers to the content of policy-making, which will be dealt with only shortly in the following.

In her investigation, Darhour (2008) found that the national list women MPs in general have been sensitive to gender issues and tend to work together despite their different and sometimes conflicting political allegiances. A cross-party *Forum for parliamentary women* was set up as a platform for coordination about policy initiatives to gain more rights for women and pressure for more gains about gender equality. Based on interviews with women MPs, Darhour is able to conclude that most of the national list MPs sees it as one of their main priorities to be responsive to women by bringing their concerns to the forefront of the political agenda in parliament. During the electoral terms with more women in parliament as a consequence of the reserved seats, some important legislation which advances women's rights has been passed. Thus, it would be wrong to dismiss the Moroccan women elected on the national list as just 'tokens'. In her study of women in the Rwandan parliament, the first in the world with a female majority, Jennie Burnet concludes that in spite of their fragile position and in spite of being embedded in a system of patronage politics, Rwandan women MPs have made a difference, not least in terms of symbolic representation: "gender quotas *have* made a significant impact on gendered ideas about the public sphere" (Burnet, 2012: 204). Like in Morocco, this process started in Rwanda before the introduction of quotas, but gender quotas have accelerated the preexisting process of change, Burnet argues (Burnet, 2012: 205).

Moroccan party leadership is, however, still a male dominated field and, therefore, women have difficulties in having their voices heard. This can be traced to the machismo that still reigns in parties and in Moroccan society and which makes the constituency electoral battle for women very difficult (Darhour, 2008). In spite of certain progress, women's political participation is still hampered by socio-cultural constraints that consider women's voices as *awrah* (not to be exposed in public, as with certain parts of the body) (Sadiqi, 2010).

### Conclusion: sustainable representation of women by the use of quotas

In Morocco, substantial reforms were made in women's position during the past decade: in 2002, the informal 'honorary agreement' reserving 30 seats in parliament for women, in 2003 the reform of the family laws, in 2008 the Mudawana reform, in 2003 a quota reform for local governments, and in 2011 the legalization of the quota provision and the increase from 30 to 60 seats reserved for women. In general, through the new constitution, reform, not revolution, has characterized the Moroccan society during and after the 'Arab Spring'. The changes in women's position are part of these reforms, and at the same time the strong women's organizations in Morocco have themselves been key actors in the reform process. The focus of this article has been the changes in women's numerical political representation.

For the purpose of studying the effect of gender quotas in countries on the fast track of changing women's representation, we have developed the concept of *sustainable political representation of women*, defined as a durable, substantial

political representation of women, freed of the risk of immediate major backlash. In this article we have studied the effect of the Moroccan quota provisions by looking more closely at a number of indicators, identifiable within the relatively short time-span of three elections.

Firstly, the number of women in Moroccan politics has increased substantially because of the quota provisions, from 1% in 1997 to today's 17%. Morocco has thus passed the threshold which in old democracies was the most difficult to overcome, that of moving from zero to 10% women (Dahlerup and Leyenaar, in press). Is this progress robust? Have the quota provisions resulted in durable changes?

One obvious lack of sustainability was, secondly, the informal character of the 2002 'honorary agreement'. In 2002, the Moroccan experience and debate over the issue of the quota made the measure of reservation so fragile. Women's organizations were not happy with the way it was set and were afraid that parties would break their promise and run men for the national lists. Yet, 30 women in fact were elected to the national list in 2002 and 2007. But the 2007 election also made it clear that setbacks are possible and that the expected increase in women elected on district lists seemed still out of reach. Based on these experiences, women's organizations in Morocco became increasingly convinced that the longevity of women's political visibility needs decades of positive action and special measures to reach the ultimate goal of sustainable gender parity. In the context of the revolutions that swept away the political regimes in most other MENA region countries, Moroccan decision makers decided to provide legal safeguards for increasing women's representation by an extended quota provision from 30 to 60 women and making it a law.

Thirdly, the article has analyzed the relation between the election of women on reserved seats on the national list and the election of women to the regular district seats. It would be a sign of increased sustainability of women's representation, if, following the implementation of quotas for the national list, more women would have been elected to the regular district seats, as a result of new resources gained by women in political life, and the emergence of new perceptions of women as potential political leaders. However, as this study has shown, it is still extremely difficult for women to be elected to a district seats, predominantly because the political parties have only placed a very small number, 3–4% women as head of their district lists. Yet, in 2011 seven women were elected on district seats, the highest number ever. This study reveals that none of the district seats' women MPs came from a position as elected on the national list. Even if it is difficult to conclude that the reserved seats became a glass ceiling for the district seats, the reserved seats in Morocco – in contrast to Rwanda and Uganda – have not, at least in the short run, contributed to the opening up for more women elected to the regular district seats in parliament, hence in this respect a lack of sustainability.

Did the mechanism of reserving national list seats for women, adopted so far, provide a *glass ceiling* for women in the regular district elections? Evidently, even in the absence of any reserved seats, the political parties in Morocco might have continued their practice of not nominating but a few women as their top candidates. However, the scene was changing and the pressure from women's organizations was mounting. In

the opinion of the women's movement, the political parties found that the 30 women elected from the national list were enough to represent the women of Morocco. It might have been just as important, though, that the political parties were still reluctant to nominate women at the top of their lists in the districts, because they anticipated a negative reaction by the voters to a list headed by a woman.

In conclusion, the link between reserved seats and women elected to regular seats is rather complex and context dependent to allow for generalizations at this stage of the research of gender quotas. In Rwanda, the reserved seats did not prevent women from being elected in large numbers to the district seats, thus resulting in 56% women in parliament (Powley, 2005). One cannot expect the long history of women's exclusion from political institutions to be transcended in two legislative periods. With the reservation, women not only sustained their numerical presence in politics, but the reservation may also have a lasting impact on their capacities to contribute to politics, since it also gave the women MPs the possibility to pursue a feminist platform and participate in the public debate on women's issues, which had not been part of the public political discussion before.

This article has not included an analysis of the actual record of the elected women in the Moroccan parliament (for this, see Darhour, 2008; Darhour & Krit, 2012). The focus has been on the descriptive representation of women in Morocco. It is, though, important to stress, that a gender quota system is not only an effective measure to increase the number of women MPs but also an institutional strategy that allows women's perspectives and interests to be represented (Phillips, 1995), and that empowers them to secure their veritable citizenship (Yoon, 2006). And conversely, the long-term sustainability of an increase in the numerical representation, for instance through gender quotas, will always be dependent of the change of other factors in society as well.

The low increase of the number of female candidates elected in district lists from 5 to 7 after three rounds of reservation may indeed not be that surprising. It indicates that it takes time for parties to trust the abilities of women leaders, and update their beliefs (Bouras, 2007). Gains must be institutionalized and widely promoted and accepted in society for their consolidation and longevity to be assured (Maghraoui, 2001). In a shorter perspective, the longevity of women's political representation can be guaranteed by enforcing stronger requirements for women's participation in internal party structures, specific legislative provisions for the number and rank order of women candidates on all electoral lists (as opposed to just the national list), and a minimum percentage of women-headed lists.

In terms of sustainability, it is the conclusion of this study, that the quota regulation in Morocco in the form of reserved seats is not in any danger of being removed, on the contrary, it has been legalized and expanded. The quota provision has led to some changes in women's resources and in women's agency in Morocco. However, the very few women elected to the regular district seats so far indicates that if the reserved seats were to be removed, women's representation would probably decrease, surely not as dramatically as in Egypt after the removal of the previous quota system, but enough to show the limited sustainability of women's political representation even in Morocco.

## Acronyms

ADFM	Democratic Association of Moroccan women	
AMDF	Moroccan Association of Women's Rights	
CEDAW	Convention on the Eliminations of all Forms of Discrimination against Women	
ESPOD	Departure Point Space	
LDDF	Democratic League of Women's Rights	
NDI	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs	
OMDH	Moroccan Organisation of Human Rights	
UAF	Union of Women's Action	
UC	Constitutional Union	
IP	Istiqlal Party	Nationalism-conservatism
MNP	Popular National Movement	Conservative liberalism
PJD	Justice and Development Party	Islamism (right-wing)
PPS	Party of Progress and Socialism	Socialism
RNI	National Rally of Independents	Liberalism
USFP	Socialist Union of Popular Forces	Social democracy
PAM	Authenticity and Modernity Party	Conservatism liberalism
FFD	Front of Democratic Forces	Socialism
UC	Constitutional Union	Conservatism liberalism

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> A clear example of lack of sustainability is the recent Egyptian election 2011–12, where women only got 2% of the seats in the (now dissolved) People's Assembly. This followed the removal of the unpopular quota system from the 2010 election, which reserved two seats for women per governorate (13%).

<sup>2</sup> Included were: ADFM, and UAF as well as AMDF, Joussour, ESPOD, UAF, LDDF, and Amal; Women's Sections in Parties (IP, UC, USFP, FFD, PPS); Associations of Citizenship (Alternatives, Afak); Human Rights Associations (OMDH, Comité des Droits de l'Homme) — see list of abbreviations.

<sup>3</sup> Public protests as part of the Arab Spring in February 2011 led King Mohammed VI to announce an early election, a process of constitutional reform granting new civil rights, and the relinquishing of some of his administrative powers. Initially, the parliamentary elections were to have taken place in 2012, but, following the events of the “Arab Spring” and the adoption of the new Moroccan Constitution by a referendum held on 1st of July 2011, the date of November 25th was set.

<sup>4</sup> That no more than 27% women were elected in Tunisia under the radical zipper system, alternating women and men all throughout the list, was caused by the fact that a large number of parties participated in the election, that most parties only received one seats per constituency, and that women only headed 7% of the total number of lists.

<sup>5</sup> PAM is a Moroccan political party founded by Fouad Ali El Himma, adviser to King Mohammed VI and former interior minister in 2008. It has been perceived as backed by the monarchy. The party was established in 2009. It was preceded by the formation of Authenticity and Modernity parliamentary bloc after the 2007 parliamentary election.

<sup>6</sup> Such a rule, however, would prevent women MPs from getting the experience from several terms in parliament that many men have through being re-elected over and over again.

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