

Young People's Political Engagement in the City of Zinder, Niger Republic

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Abstract: *This study explores the determinants of young people's engagement in the Niger Republic with a particular focus on the city of Zinder. In fact, several factors such as personal, societal and institutional motivations push young people to embrace politics. However, these young people experience various challenges while engaging in politics. Accordingly, this study analyses the perceptions of young people towards politics and political leaders and the linked impact of these perceptions on young people attitudes. Primary data for this research were collected through a face-to-face survey with young people and semi-structured interviews, focus groups, case studies and direct observations were used for data collection's purpose. The results showed that the first target of to the people was finding a job so that many of them engaged in politics to meet their basic needs. Moreover, engagement in politics includes the search for a political tutor or 'ubangida' (in Hausa) who plays a role of a bridge between the young persons engaged in politics and the decision-makers of the parties. Also, the political tutor plays the role of financier for young politicians. In addition, most of common perceptions of the politics among young people is based on self- interest.*

Keywords: *Young People Political Engagement, Niger Republic, Zinder, Politics Perceptions*

Résumé : *L'objectif de cet article est de faire ressortir les logiques qui sous-tendent l'engagement politique des jeunes dans la ville de Zinder. Ces logiques sont de plusieurs ordres dont entre autres des motivations d'ordre personnel, d'ordre sociétal et aussi d'ordre institutionnel. Pour ce faire, l'accent est mis sur les trajectoires politiques des jeunes et les défis auxquels ils font face dans leur engagement. Plus précisément, cette étude analyse les diverses perceptions que les jeunes ont autour de la politique et des leaders politiques et leurs répercussions sur leur attitude politique. La collecte des données a été faite principalement à partir des entretiens semi-directifs, des focus group, des études de cas et des observations directes. Les résultats obtenus montrent que la première raison qui motive les jeunes à s'engager en politique est la satisfaction de leurs besoins élémentaires. De plus, l'engagement en politique nécessite la recherche d'un tuteur ou ubangida (en haoussa) qui joue le rôle de pont entre les jeunes engagés et les états-majors des partis. Le tuteur politique joue également le rôle du financier pour les jeunes politiciens. Par ailleurs, la perception la mieux partagée de la politique au niveau des jeunes est qu'elle est la manifestation de la recherche d'intérêt individuel.*

Mots clés : *Engagement Politique des Jeunes, République du Niger, Zinder, Perceptions de la Politique*

I. Introduction

Youth and politics is a topical issue as it touches on a major challenge of our time. To take an interest in themes of this nature is to go off the beaten track in terms of their innovative nature and the debates they provoke. According to Muxel (2018: 32), studying the political choices and engagement of young people today is a

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necessity insofar as the period of youth is seen as one of transition and at the same time experimentation that marks an important sequence in the construction of political identities. "This is the time for the expression of the first choices, and for some the first engagements". Youth is also a time when social and political integration takes place gradually and is fraught with various difficulties. As a result, youth participation in elections is not only lower but also less consistent. Also, according to Iknow politics (2017: 2), politics in Africa is generally seen as a space for experienced men and as such young people are systematically marginalized or ignored as potential candidates for elected positions.

Furthermore, it is important to remember that in many countries, youth are considered to be the hope of tomorrow, not only because of their physical and mental strength, but also because they are the successors of previous generations. This is one of the reasons why the United Nations (UN) emphasizes that the spirit of creativity and innovation, the ideals and the energy that young people possess are indispensable elements for the permanent development of societies. In order to promote youth participation, the UN and its member countries designated 1985 as the International Year of Youth. In order to perpetuate these moments of meeting and exchange of ideas on the future of youth throughout the world, the UN General Assembly approved in 1999 the recommendation of the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth to designate 12 August as International Youth Day. Thus, this international day is commemorated in several countries to discuss the major issues and challenges facing young people. It is important to note that today, it is estimated that about 1.2 billion or 16% of the world's population are young people aged 15-24.² In Niger, and in Africa in general, youth constitute the largest segment of the population. According to the United Nations Population Division, about 42% of the world's population is under the age of 25, while in Africa this represents 60% of the population.³ This is one of the reasons why the African continent is seen as the place where the future of the world will be played out.

Moreover, young people can only fulfil their mission of success and hope when they are well educated and politically engaged. For several decades, Nigerien youth, and particularly those in Zinder, have observed a certain reluctance towards conventional politics. Young people remained more or less passive and relegated to second place in relation to politics. Until recently, young people in Niger were more interested in associative life, particularly school unionism. But in 2020, with the holding of the last municipal, presidential and legislative elections in Niger, certain awareness and strong mobilization of young people was noticed. Interest in politics is increasing and some interviewees talk about young people's enthusiasm for politics. This article is structured around three main points. The first section deals with the motives and steps of young people's political engagement. The second section explains the difficulties that young people face in their engagement. Finally, the third section analyses the political trajectories of some young people as well as their perceptions of politics and political leaders in Niger in general and in Zinder in particular.

II. Method

This study is based on qualitative method approach. In-depth interviews were conducted with key actors who are included young people involved in politics or not, media actors, civil society actors, political analysts or specialists, and customary and religious leaders. Snowball sampling and purposive sampling were conducted (individuals interviews and focus groups were included). Firstly, all the collected data was synthesized and some other recorded interviews were transcribed by grouping the themes based on type and tendency. Each transcription and synthesis were done according to the relation of gathered information. Additionally, all summaries were crossed to produce a general plan. Finally, the collected information was examined, interpreted and compared with the findings of other scholars.

III. Results and Discussion

3.1. Young People's Political Engagement: Learned Lessons

² <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/youth>. Accessed on 24/11/2021.

³ <https://espace-mondial-atlas.sciencespo.fr/fr/rubrique-contrastes-et-inegalites/article-1A04-vieux-et-jeunes-la-dynamique-des-populations.html>. Accessed on 24/11/2021.

This section analyses the determinants underlying the motivations of young people engagement in politics in the city of Zinder, and then describes the different steps followed by these young people in be fully engaged in politics.

3.1.1. Motivations For Engagement

Several factors influence young people's political engagement. They include self-fulfilment, individual interests. Therefore, in the context of economic gloom, widespread and increasing poverty, increasing unemployment rate the key target of citizens remains to satisfy their basic living conditions for instance searching for a stable job. In Niger Republic and particularly in the city of Zinder political engagement has become a common means used by young people to be employed through political channels. Accordingly, the creation of political parties, or being active political militancy in political parties becomes the trigger or self-fulfilment channel.

This view of politics and political engagement of most young people result from the behaviour of political elites and leaders who have led the country. Although the article 2 of the Charter of Political Parties in the Niger Republic clearly states that "political parties are non-profit organizations which, in accordance with the constitution, bring together Nigerien citizens around a social project and a political programme", this reality is quite different practically. Therefore, a creation of political party is identical to company creation, which main objective is obtaining several advantages and resources based on public resources management through political nominations etc.

One of the advantages of political party creation of changing social status from an individual to a well-known leader increases their popularity and therefore raises the citizens' respect and consideration. Likewise, political engagement provides individuals with several advantages, such as guaranteeing socio-professional integration, obtaining job appointment positions, in the government bodies and public administrations. For instance, job appointments are opportunities for politicians to "suck" the State, as noted by Bayard in his book entitled *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (1989: 288) and quoted by Tsana Nguengang (2015: 831). The "politics of the belly" expression refers to the conception of the State apparatus perceived as a means of access to wealth, privileges, power and prestige for oneself and for the members of a group/clan. For most young people interviewed, the main reason to remain politically both for individuals as well as politicians is the promise of better status. From sociological point of view of the motivations of young people's political behaviour and attitudes, Durkheim (1893; 1897) explained in classical sociology that although young people are not entirely passive, society seems to be more active. Indeed, according to many Nigeriens citizens a politician is a person/individual living in abundant and easily accessed wealth. This erroneous perception of politics and reveals one of triggers underlining political engagement of many young people in the city of Zinder as clearly expressed by one of the interviewees as follows:

"Firstly, I am engaged in politics as it is a way to satisfy my own need. I have seen many non-educated people who from stretch have become billionaires shortly. Holding education Degree(s) so that expecting to live a succeed in life requires political engagement for us". (Political engaged young, interviewed on 29/08/2021).

This reveals that the decision to engage in politics results from the expectation of obtaining numerous benefits. Accordingly, many young people believe that politics is an area of clientelism, influence-peddling and excessive politicization of public administration. Most of common perceptions of the politics among young people reveal that self-interest is the major motivation in such endeavours. All that matters is what the individual gains. The individual is therefore a rational, utilitarian actor who mobilizes to maximize personal gain.

Other factors such as the international discourse influence and marginalization have contributed to mobilizing young people to engage in politics. It should be noted that for a long time, Nigerien youth have remained somewhat distant from politics. This situation is not only due to political cynicism or the negative perception of

politics by youth. It is partly due to their marginalization and exploitation by political parties. Young people are in some ways the 'cash cows' for politicians.⁴

3.2. Steps of Engagement in Politics

First, it is important to note that there are two types of engagement in conventional politics; being an active member of any party and to defending, his/her own ideas, convictions and societal agenda. Overall, the success of this engagement requires following some key steps.

3.2.1. Involvement in the Basic Structures or Offices of a Party

According to many young interviewees, one of key steps to be engaged in politics is entering into local (departmental, regional or communal) political structures. This step implies an immersion in politics by following some trainings and learning of basic principles and charters of political party and arena as well as represent a strategy to be well-known by the population and political party staff. Therefore, the young people involve themselves in numerous important political parties' activities but they often face struggles and internal quarrels with other militants. For instance, it is common to see illiterates⁵ competing for a high-level political post such as the general secretary of the party, even though they do not have the required skills. Since the political parties are aware that the financial factor is key factor in mobilizing voters so that the rich illiterates can be appointed or elected, especially when they are to support financially the expenses of the activities of party instead of electing young and intellectual members. In this context, one interviewee expressed his opinion as follows:

"Compared to other cities of the Niger Republic, many, illiterates are in charge of politics in almost the existing political parties in the city of Zinder. Today, for a young person being a trader, businessman even illiterate will give him political decision power as he finances the activities of the party (Political analyst, interview on 31/08/2021).

Therefore, it is common to see illiterates elected as regional chairpersons of political parties and influence greatly the decisions of the parties.

3.2.2. Role of the Political Tutor or "ubangida" (in Hausa) in Political Engagement

Another important step for young people to be engaged politically is the mentorship. Several observers of the political scene reveal that political mentor or 'ubangida'⁶ (in Hausa) is a prerequisite for imposing oneself or succeeding in politics in Zinder. Locally, a political mentor means a communicator or interlocutor between a young person engaged in politics and the leaders or decision-makers of the party. Accordingly, young people should be close to influential persons such as the president of the party, a minister or some other officials of the party who act as a bridge between the young person and the party leaders. Such influential persons play a role of facilitator, spokesperson and those who increase the popularity of the young people through whom a young person engaged in a political party can have political nominations, or assigned to posts of their choices as civil servants, public markets if they are traders and provide them with various advantages linked to politics. In this context, a respondent expressed himself as follows:

"Emerging in politics require to have a tutor otherwise we would not be any know person or obtain any benefit so that we would remain simple militants with a simple role of voting the political party". (Young politician, interview on 08/29/2021).

Political tutors or 'political brokers'⁷ are more or less similar to local development brokers, as described by Bierschenk, Chauveau and Olivier de Sardan (2000: 2-7). Generally local brokers are associative leaders who act as intermediaries and provide the interface between the recipients or beneficiaries of a project and

⁴ This expression was used by a teacher from the University of Zinder during our interview on 02.09.2021.

⁵ In Niger, illiterate means someone who has never been to school, so who can neither read nor write in the official language of the country, which is French.

⁶ This word literally means 'head of the house' or boss of the house in Hausa.

⁷ For more details see (Olivier de Sardan, 2015; Richard, 2012; Garrigues, 2002). They are also referred to as "big men" or political bosses for the role they play in financing political parties.

development institutions. Similar to these brokers, the political mentors play the role of bridge between young people engaged in politics and party officials at the highest level.

The importance of a political mentor also depends on the type of party in which young people are active so that having a mentor depends on size of political party and its country's popularity. The importance of the tutor in a large party lies in his or her role as an interlocutor who relays and escalates the activities and attachment of young people to a party to the top, i.e., to the party's senior officials. A respondent explains the role of the tutor in a large political party as follows:

"It is always necessary to have a tutor in a big political party as he/she can impose you to have some responsibilities as well as other advantages". (Young politician, interview of 09/11/2021).

It is clear that the objective of mentorship is mainly the pursuit of self-interest since the merit is quite absent in political governance, one can only have a political place when one has relations with those who are close to power. The same view applies to the case of a young person who has just created his political party. The reality on the ground requires to be tutored insofar as the overwhelming majority of citizens hear only one language: that of his contribution to the satisfaction of their basic needs.

IV. Constraints on Political Engagement

This section analyses some of the main difficulties or challenges that young people face in engaging in politics in the city of Zinder.

4.1. Thorny Question of Financial Means

This study has acknowledged that the financial factor is crucial in politics. It has transversal influence in the workings of the party. As a result, it is one greatest challenge for young persons to rise in politics arena in the Niger Republic (Mindzie, 2015: 5). It is important to remind that money or material is an important factor in the conquest of power in every field. The particular case of many African countries and especially the case of the Niger Republic is that money is not only at the heart of voter mobilization, but also constitutes the primary motivation engaging people in politics.

In many rural areas and cities of the Niger Republic both, politics is considered as an industry of political militants and leaders due to the politicians and some NGOs leadersbehavioursshape this assistance dependent mind to the populations. This is precisely where the role played by development brokers comes in Bierschenk, Chauveau and Olivier de Sardan (2000: 20) point out that development brokers contribute in large part to the reconfiguration of local political fields and the loss of State legitimacy at the local level. The studies carried out by Olivier de Sardan (1995; 2001; 2014) on developmental aid and the different intervention of the NGOs in Africa, specifically in the Niger Republic show the complexities and logic underlining these interventions as well as their negative and unexpected effects on the local population.

These kinds of interventions, combined with the money- and material-centred behaviour of some politicians have impacted young people and militants in general. For example, in the city of Zinder the expected financial benefits are enough to bring together a group of young people to discuss various political subjects beyond the periods of political election. During the election campaigns, such behaviour has even become normal, even anchored in Nigerien mores and customs. It is in this context that a respondent expressed himself as follows:

"After my analysis I understood that our society is so rotten that when you try to sensitize people about a specific problem, an urgent problem of society to which you have to bring solutions, as long as you don't bring anything (allusion to money), people won't listen to you. So young people with a proper vision and development plan for the development of the country could not succeed as the major barrier are financial resources". (Political analyst, interview on 08/09/2021).

Financial barriers are the biggest bottleneck for young people to be engaged in politics. Although the political engagement of young people in the city of Zinder is not based on an ideology or a societal programme, few young people have more or less clear ideas and worry about the future development of their city and country. This willingness, determination and skills towards a necessity of relevant policy agenda to change the politics

views and public affairs management. As a result of the lack of financial resources, they are forced to keep low profile and follow the elders.

V. The Political Trajectory of Young People Engaged in Politics

In this sub-section, the political paths of some young people in the city of Zinder are analysed with a particular focus on the triggers and builder of their political interests.

5.1. The Triggering of Interest in Politics: The Role of Idols

Engagement in politics is guided by individual's interest, which is driven by several factors. In this study some young interviewees engaged in politics referred primarily to the role of their idols in governance and leadership. For some, the former president of Niger, Tandja Mamadou has played a decisive role in their politics' engagement due to his mode of governance focused on taking into account the tangible needs of the population especially those living in rural areas. It is in this context that this respondent expressed himself in the following terms:

"The tangible actions of His Excellency President Tandja throughout the overall country, especially in rural areas, that motivated me to be engaged in politics. This former President built schools, health centres, water sources (pumps and whells) in many rural areas as well as boreholes in areas that experience serious drinkable water. He is my role model and my wish is to lead my country like him." (Young leader, interview of 11/09/2021).

This points out that the triggering of political interest is not essentially the community's entitlement. On the contrary, it can result from the quality of a single individual's mode of governance and leadership. For other young people, the quality of Mr. Ibrahim Yacouba; the President of KishinKassa political party was the key determinants of their political engagement as shown in the interview of one of a young person in Zinder:

"The open mind of Mr. Ibrahim Yacouba, his simplicity and humility are exceptional. We know each other since I was civil society actor while he was the deputy director of cabinet of the President His Excellency Mahamadou Issoufou. From this occasion we keep contact and so I found him a humble person as he responded to each of my phone call whereas others leaders in the similar position appears more pompous as it can be observed through a wide protocol they had. Therefore, I would like to have his behaviour when I would be a politician as well as I would follow approach". (Young leader, interview of 11/09/2021).

In the same way as the previous respondent, we can also see from this interview extract that the origin of this young person's engagement was a political leader. Indeed, these words show that the leader's behaviour towards him greatly influenced his decision to take an interest in politics.

5.2. The Influence of Associative Life on Political Engagement

This point explains the important role that trade unionism played in the political engagement not only of the youth of the city of Zinder, but also of several other Nigerien political leaders. More specifically, the analysis focuses on the often ambiguous and complementary relationships between politicians, trade unionists or civil society actors in Niger who shuttle between the political arena and the trade union sector.

5.3. From Trade Unionism to the Political Arena

Civil society associations, workers' unions and students' unions play a key role in performing civic education and building political awareness. The political history of many African countries⁸, especially that of the Niger republic show that trade unionism had become a gateway to political arena. Gazibo (2005: 127) indicated that Nigerien trade unionism symbolizes by Djibo Bakary, a prime minister of the Niger Republic during the first period before the proclamation of the independency of the country. At that time, trade unionists and politicians were allies, so there was no real border between the two groups of actors. The recent history of the country is also a rather illustrative example of this reality. The study of Smirnova's (2019: 167-188) is an illustration of the relationship between student activists and government authorities in the Niger Republic. The author

⁸ For more information on the relationship between trade unions and political parties in Africa, see Edward Webster (2008); Gosselin (1953); Pavan (1954).

demonstrates the extent to which the educational institutions such as schools and universities contribute to building individual political formation. It is important to mention that most political leaders of the Niger Republic were former members of the *Union des Scolaires Nigériens* (USN), which is an organization that was at the forefront of the advent of democracy and multi-party politics in the country. Considering the number of trade unionists who convert to politics, the trade unionism becomes like the "primary school of politics". One of young political leader interviewed highlights the role played by civil society structures in increasing his popularity and political engagement:

"I first evolved in a structure that is not really mine and then we took the initiative to set up our own structure called Niger Excellence. It is an association of young men and women who work tirelessly for the promotion and culture of excellence in Zinder in particular and in Niger in general. Behind the association, we had to carry out several activities and if we are known today in Niger, I am sure it is through this". (Young leader, interview of 11/09/2021).

Creating a civil society structure as well as joining the school union has become a strategy for young people to build relationships with politicians, especially with the government. Being in these kinds of organizations allows young people to be popular and known by the public.

5.4. Some Common Characteristics in the Trajectory of Young Leaders

It was found in the fieldwork for this study that young people engaged in politics have some common characteristics in their trajectory. The aim of this section is to analyse these characteristics and the logic behind them.

5.4.1. Political Nomadism: Being Active in Several Parties

The analysis of the trajectory of all young people engaged in politics in this study reveals some common characteristics. One of the common and key important characteristics is being active in more than one political party. This is namely called a nomadism or political transhumance. According to Boumakani (2008: 499), this notion of nomadism or political transhumance comes from pastoral terminology and "describes the periodic migration of herds in search of spaces more favourable to their nourishment and development. Transferred to political arena, it denotes the attitude of the politicians who migrate from a political party where they were militant at the moment of their elections to another party in search of individual interests". This phenomenon is not particular to the politicians of the Niger Republic, but occurs in other countries such as Canada, France, Burkina Faso, Gabon and so on. However, the causes and consequences of this political transhumance differ amongst the countries. Accordingly, some causes may be ideological some political transhumance behaviours follow individual interests whereas they might be due to the search of power (Poirier et Kyelem, 2012: 4-5). In the same way, political nomadism is defined as "a phenomenon characterized by the resignation of an elected official from his political party to join another party".⁹

Contrary to these definitions, in Niger Republic and particularly in Zinder, political nomadism is not only parliamentary. It is a common practice for all categories of militants including simple grassroots militants and party leaders. According to Olivier de Sardan (2015: 28) Francophone Africa region face these "frequent changes of party that characterize many politicians, and even the militants themselves". The latter, depends on circumstances and individual interests and moves from one political party to another without any concerns. This occurs during the presidential elections between the first and second rounds when a political party can support one party according to the power balance, especially in favour of the well-positioned candidate.

5.4.2. Reasons For Political Nomadism: Between Easy Gain and Lack of Ideology

In the city of Zinder, the reasons for political nomadism are of several kinds. The young political militants interviewed claim to have moved from one party to another several times. One of the major variables that cuts across all the others is how politics is perceived and practiced by not only the leaders but also the militants. In a context where politics is seen as a business, it is natural that political actors use, innovate and create strategies in order to increase profits. Political nomadism is one of many such strategies. As a result, people do not think in

⁹<https://www.burkina24.com/2021/05/31/dr-aboubacar-sango-le-nomadisme-politique-est-une-insulte-a-lelecteur/>. Accessed on 09/12/2021.

terms of ideology or a societal project, but act and behave according to the most advantageous parties or camps. Olivier de Sardan (2015: 29) rightly points out that the frequent transhumance of politicians and militants in Niger can be explained by an “absence of ideological cement or political programme” within the parties. Some young people engaged in politics cite unemployment and lack of jobs as the reason for switching parties. They are therefore looking for a place where they can earn more, take care of themselves and provide for their families and close relatives. Unemployment is certainly a reality in the city of Zinder, but an analysis of the situation of these young political migrants shows that their movement from one political party to another is not only motivated by the search for a job, but to amass wealth in the image of several politicians they see around them. These young people always manage to be with the government and are ready to change sides depending on which party is in power. The aim is therefore to enjoy the advantages and benefits of power at all times. They see politics as a one-way street, and there is no question of being in opposition. Nevertheless, depending on the direction taken by a political mentor, it is often the case that a young person remains in an opposition party. Therefore, it depends on the size of the gain and the individual interests at stake.

5.4.3. Negative Perception of Politics as an Obstacle to Engagement

It is no coincidence that a section of the youth in the city of Zinder is hostile to both politics and civil society. These hostilities and criticisms underline the actions and behaviour of politicians and civil society actors. The behaviours of these two key actors in a country help to shape young people's perceptions of them in one way or another. These perceptions are also major barriers or facilitators to young people's engagement in politics. Among the negative acts of politicians are lies, false promises during election periods, systematic corruption in all areas that is almost ingrained in our customs, embezzlement of public funds, etc. These various acts create a certain distrust of politics as a whole, the disregard of political leaders and a lack of trust. As a result, in a country with a Muslim majority, some of the young people interviewed consider politics to be incompatible with the precepts of Islam. In an area where lies and deceit have become commonplace, where people behave without any morality in the name of their individual interests, young people see politics as a path where one can easily stray from the right path. Politics is seen as a dirty, dishonest business, where anything goes to achieve one's goals. It is in this context that Olivier de Sardan (2016) points out that, in general, there is a rejection of the political class and also of politics by Nigeriens. This rejection is due to misperceptions of politics as 'discord, endless bickering, conflict and rivalry. All of the above-mentioned bad behaviours seem to disappoint some of the young people, leading them to adopt a posture of withdrawal and protest. Some of these young people are most often grouped in “*fadas and palais*” and undertake violent actions against the population of the city of Zinder. They see themselves as people who have no interest in politics. But it must be said that this criticism of politicians and distancing from politics are other ways of doing politics. This is what some political specialists such as Lionel and Guionnet (2005) and Guionnet (2005) call 'doing politics differently' or 'doing politics elsewhere'.¹⁰

VI. Conclusion

This article investigates the logics underlying the young people's political engagement in the city of Zinder. Accordingly, the study points out many aspects. First, it examines the main reasons motivating young people to be engaged in politics. In fact, within a context of economic gloom, widespread poverty and increasing unemployment, the first target of the people is to find a job so that many of them engage in politics to meet their basic needs. Also, the international agenda has been dominated by discourses encouraging the promotion and engagement of young people in political governance. In some cases, development aids are conditioned on the implication and participation of young people in governance. This has facilitated and encouraged young people to show interest in politics. Another important aspect that motivates the young people was their marginalization and this rise their politics awareness. This study also investigates the different steps followed by young persons to be engaged in politics. In this context, one of the findings of the study reveal that the first step is to engage in the basic structures of political parties. This step is important as it gives young people opportunities to learn the principles of the parties and the influential persons of the parties. The second step

¹⁰ For more details on the expression "doing politics differently", see (Jérôme Lafargue, 1998; Denis-Constant Martin, 1989; Jean François Bayart, 1985, Christian Coulon, 1997).

includes the search for a political mentor or '*ubangida*' who plays a role of a bridge between the young persons engaged in politics and the decision-makers of the parties. Though young people face several constraints in their engagement in politics. The key constraint is financial resource. With this regard, the study shows that money is perceived as a means and an end in politics. Young people who join a political party aim above all for material satisfaction. Those who set up their own parties and have ambitions to make a political career face the thorny financial barrier. Since ideology or political programme are not important, what attracts voters is the immediate money they earn. The political tutor or '*ubangida*' mentioned earlier often plays the role of financier for young politicians. In such a situation, they find themselves at the mercy of this tutor. As a result, their political fulfilment may be compromised. Another issue explored in this article is the trajectory of some politically engaged youth. Firstly, a number of elements that trigger interest in politics were analysed. These include the role of political leaders, whom some young people see as idols and role models. Then, there is the influence of trade unionism, which for many is a political school. Some become trade union leaders in order to prepare their political career. The case of many Nigerien politicians illustrates the role that trade union experiences play in politics. One of the common characteristics identified in the young people's background is political nomadism. Indeed, most of them have been active in several political parties for personal reasons. At the end of this study, one can only emphasize the perceptions that young people have about politics and political leaders. These perceptions are shaped by the behaviour of politicians and the way public affairs are managed. Young people's political engagement is influenced by the way politics is practiced and experienced on the ground.

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