Policy Report

Breaking the triple marginalisation of youth?
Mapping the future prospects of youth inclusion in Arab Mediterranean countries

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Abstract

Today, the initial promises of the so-called “Arab Spring” seem uncertain. While some democratic reforms have been achieved, many obstacles and challenges still exist. In Arab Mediterranean countries (AMCs), whose citizens are predominantly young, there is an urgent need to forecast the possible consequences of the current processes of social change. This policy report sets its horizon to 2021, or a decade after the popular uprisings. It examines the following questions:

1. What kind of future scenarios can be forecast for a region afflicted by social, economic and political uncertainties?
2. In what ways can young people engage in the processes that shape their preferred futures?

To answer these questions, this paper identifies the present tendencies and processes affecting young lives with the aim of recognising possible future trends. It also discusses the power structures and actors that are involved in the construction of their preferred futures. This paper is based on the analysis of research materials collected by the project *Researching Arab Mediterranean Youth: Towards a New Social Contract* (SAHWA) in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, and Lebanon. Although plural and affected by local and national contexts, the current youth predicament can be characterised as a triple marginalisation: social, economic and political.

The paper recommends that more substantial regional cooperation and conflict resolution is needed in order to achieve social, economic, and political sustainability and the construction of young people’s preferred futures. Therefore, we frame the following recommendations in regard to the “Alliance scenario” developed by Silvia Colombo (2010), which outlines positive future prospects predicated on increasing cooperation between AMCs and the EU-27 countries (Groenewold & de Beer, 2013):

1. Coherent policymaking is needed to tackle youth marginalisation;
2. Young people should be involved in the decision-making processes that shape their future lives;
3 Measures should be taken to build confidence in political institutions among young people;
4 Solutions to youth marginalisation need to involve cross-sectoral cooperation and policymaking;
5 Each young individual needs a meaningful life and future and a non-violent environment in which to engage meaningfully.

Keywords: Arab Mediterranean countries (AMCs), young people, youth engagement, inclusion, marginalisation, desirable futures
Introduction

In the early 2010s, young people played crucial roles in the events of the so-called Arab Spring. Members of the younger generations, who represent the majority in Arab Mediterranean countries (AMCs), engaged in the now-famous popular uprisings and effectively challenged the hitherto prevailing imaginaries of the “apathetic youth” in the region. Five years on, however, the popular uprisings have not brought substantial changes to the prevailing youth predicaments of the pre-2011 era. Young people still face the severe challenges of unemployment, persisting inequalities and the growing precariousness of their livelihoods and life chances.

Before 2011, authoritarian regimes in the region commonly fuelled ambiguous public perceptions of young people. The example of the “hittistes” in Algeria, a term formed from a local word meaning “wall” and designating inactive young people hanging around at the bottom of buildings, provides a typical illustration of these “unemployed generations” (Mens, 2011: 10). These disengaged young people were considered to be a menace to society. The main objective was then to find ways to circumscribe the accumulating effects of youth exclusion and despair.

By contrast, the euphoria of the revolutionary movements radically transformed these views. New imaginaries and myths around “youth” emerged, in particular in the global media, where discussions of the “Facebook revolution” or “2.0 social movements” thrived, fuelling the narrative of new technologies connected with democratic change (Loveluck, 2008). This built the image of spontaneous revolts inspired by new technologies, hence silencing the riotous dimensions of protesting in Tunisia or the impact of strikes launched by Egyptian workers in the eventual demise of Hosni Mubarak (Ayari, 2011: 57). Though the new media played a role in the revolts, the overemphasis on them served the interests of an ideological construction promoting the role of wired young elites, representatives of the soft power of liberal democracy.

Today, the initial promises of the so-called “Arab Spring” seem uncertain. While Tunisia and Egypt have managed to pursue certain democratic reforms, many obstacles still remain. Libya and Syria have been devastated by five years of warfare. The long-term impact of the
changes are still unclear in countries like Morocco, Algeria, Lebanon and Jordan, which all appear to have seen some changes in their political institutions as well.

In this context, the dominant discourses of the AMCs’ youth seem to voice a dual, contradictory message inherited from both the pre-2011 and the revolutionary events. On the one hand, we are witnessing a return of the images of the passive, threatening youth. This results from the synergy between counter-revolutionary stances within their societies and the fear of terrorism in Europe. In that respect, young people from the AMCs are depicted as potential threats, susceptible to the credo of radical Islam and of waging war on the “West”. This trope, deeply nourished by xenophobic imaginaries, finds itself strengthened by the Europe’s current migration and refugee policies. On the other hand, the overemphasis on young, active elites has persisted. Again, it is nurtured at once by the AMC regimes themselves, promoting the entrepreneurial spirit of its elite youth and its European counterparts, prompt to idealise young people “who have made the choice of modernity” and embrace the ethos of the world economy.

This double discourse hence strengthens the imaginary of youth either as threat or opportunity for social change. More fundamentally, it hides a new form of class violence as it depicts the hordes of low-income, unemployed youth as potential threats to the security of both their own countries and Europe (as terrorists, migrants or refugees). On the contrary, young elites are praised for their integration into the global economy and cosmopolitan cultures. The silencing of these symbolic inequalities obscures the representations to the point that it seems urgent to question the actual conditions of young people in the AMCs and to forecast the possible consequences of the current processes of social change in the region.

It is in this context that we reflect on the future prospects of youth political engagement in the AMCs at local and national levels. In addition to considering young people’s opportunities to participate in the political decision-making processes that shape their future lives, we also reflect on their engagements in civil society and the economy as well. This policy report sets its horizon to 2021, or a decade after the popular uprisings. It examines the following questions:
1. What kind of future scenarios can be forecast for a region afflicted by social, economic and political uncertainties?

2. In what ways can young people engage in the processes that shape their preferred futures?

To answer these questions, this paper identifies the present tendencies and processes affecting young people’s lives with the aim of recognising possible future trends. It also discusses the power structures and actors involved in the construction of their preferred futures. Although plural and affected by local and national contexts, the current youth predicament can be characterised as a triple marginalisation. Far from terrorists-in-waiting or agents of a 2.0 democracy, young people face diverse forms of social, economic and political exclusions that shape their present lives and future life chances.

Methods and data
This paper is based on an analysis of qualitative and quantitative research materials. The materials consist of fieldwork in 15 locations (3 locations in each country) and a youth survey of 10,000 young respondents (ca. 2,000/country). The data was collected by the project Researching Arab Mediterranean Youth: Towards a New Social Contract (SAHWA) in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon between March 2015 and January 2016. Transnational collaboration has been highly important for the overall analysis and final completion of this report. As a secondary source, we have also used the National Case Study reports and background papers elaborated by the SAHWA Project partners from the AMCs.

Our collaborative analysis and writing process had several stages. First, we divided the qualitative materials among the researchers involved. We tracked passages where young respondents perceive possible or probable futures or explain how they hope to influence their life chances. We organised the materials that point to different aspects of marginalisation, namely, social, economic and political. Second, we compiled the relevant statistics from the SAHWA Youth Survey 2016 and analysed the data conducting cross tabulation and Chi-Square analysis, and one-way analysis of variance. Finally, we collectively discussed the findings in order to present further discussion and recommendations.
From predicting to forecasting: Insights from futures studies

How can we foresee possible future scenarios that will affect young people’s lives during the next five years? Futures studies scholars, or futurists, have made attempts to establish futures studies as a multidisciplinary field in social sciences (see: Bell, 2009; Dator, 2002; Inayatullah, 2007; Masini, 1993; Sardar, 1999; Slaughter, 1995). Although scholars do not collectively promote coherent conceptual frameworks, they agree that futures should be treated in its plural form instead of a singular trajectory. According to Sohail Inayatullah, futures studies can be considered as “the systematic study of possible, probable and preferable futures including world views and myths that underline each future” (2013: 37). Research on possible futures has gradually moved from “predicting the future” towards “perceiving alternative future scenarios to acquire desired or preferred futures” (ibid.) whether at societal or individual levels.

Several recent studies have addressed the possible future scenarios in the Mediterranean area and, more precisely, in the AMCs. The EU-funded research project Mediterranean Prospects (MEDPRO) has published several working papers and reports on future scenarios in the timeframes up to 2030 and 2050 (Colombo, 2010; Tocci, 2011; Ayadi & Sessa, 2013; Groenewold & de Beer, 2013). The report of the World Economic Forum (2011) titled Scenarios for the Mediterranean Region provides future perspectives for the Mediterranean area with a focus on economic development up to 2030. The Paris-based think tank Institut de Prospective Économique du Monde Méditerranéen (IPEMED) has projected similar 2030 horizons with a focus on various trends, including growth, employment, migration, energy, and agriculture (Jolly, 2011).

Silvia Colombo (2010) generates three scenarios regarding the southern Mediterranean region during the next 20 years. The first scenario, called “unsustainability through decline and conflict (internal and external)” envisions the downward cycle of regional conflicts and the continued trend of authoritarian rule. This is the most pessimistic scenario, and it includes rapid neoliberal transformations coupled with the newly strengthened business elites, while urbanisation, resources of human and natural capital, and standards of education continue to decline. The second and most optimistic scenario involves several positive trends regarding sustainability, understood here in its holistic sense, including the gradual
processes of democratisation and the protection of human capital and natural resources in the region. According to Colombo, this scenario of future prosperity and sustainability at social, economic and political levels depends on successes in conflict resolution and widened cooperation across Mediterranean societies in general and between the AMCs and EU-27 countries in particular. However, several studies stress the third scenario, or “increasingly polarized regional development”, whereby the levels of divergence and social polarisation increase while some countries and sub-regions prosper and others witness complex forms of unsustainability and uneven development.

Building on Colombo’s scenarios, Groenewold and de Beer (2013) pay focused attention to population growth and provide four possible future scenarios. The first, the “Business-as-Usual (BAU) scenario”, envisons disadvantageous socioeconomic and political futures that result from the gradual degradation of the ongoing status quo. The second, the “Integration scenario”, encompasses more hopeful developments on the basis of deepening cooperation between the AMCs and EU-27 countries. The third, the “Alliance scenario”, outlines positive future prospects due to increased collaboration among the AMCs themselves in close cooperation with the EU-27. Finally, the “Worst-case scenario” sketches the processes of a Huntingtonian “clash of civilizations” across the Mediterranean Sea between two competing and even opposing cultural entities (“Arab-Islamic” versus “European-Christian”). This scenario would also strengthen the ongoing armed conflicts and uneven processes of socioeconomic development.

In general, the main factors in the dissatisfaction and challenges faced by young people in the AMCs include population growth, youth unemployment, marginalisation and lack of prospects, radicalisation, authoritarian rule, corruption and rapid economic liberalisation programmes – processes that also intertwine with each other. While acknowledging the vast literature generating pessimistic futures for the AMCs (e.g. the Arab Human Development Report, 2002), this report provides forecasts that build on alternative and more hopeful future trends, including the “Alliance scenario” mentioned above. We also take a critical position on Eurocentric approaches or, as Ziauddin Sardar argues, the acts of “colonizing the future” whereby the discipline of futures studies promotes possible futures as social
transformations in the image of Western technological achievements and modernity (Sardar, 1999: 1).

Eleonora Masini (1983: 3–4) argues that “[V]isions of the future are the stimulus to change the present”. She understands these visions as products of the lived present and the projected future: “The vision, we think, lies in a perception of the elements of change in the present, and hence is in itself the possibility of change” and therefore: “Vision captures change in the present and makes it the future, diverse other”. The future is created from the visions that contain experiences and aspirations that oppose the present:

Hence I believe that the future is born from the antithesis of the present and the vision, as discontinuous transformation or else it is born from the continuous flow, from the seeds in the present into a continuous building of visions which are the future reflecting the changing present (Masini, 1983: 4).

From another perspective, Wendell Bell (2009: 80 & 93) suggests that studying probable futures benefits from paying attention to democratic practices in collective future-making. He believes that a theory of social change should encompass human agency as “active, purposeful, responsible, and creative beings whose future-oriented behaviour has consequences for their own lives and for social structures and cultures” (Bell, 2002: 37).

While it is challenging to separate social, economic and political aspects from each other, it can be helpful to use this division analytically in order to stress the key dimensions of youth marginalisation. We also examine how social, economic and political challenges are intertwined in a variety of ways. The notion of marginality, whether social, economic or political, drives us to emphasise the underlying sources of exclusion and inequality. Despite its connotations of predetermined destinies, clear causalities cannot be assumed, as processes of marginality can also contain dynamic experiences of invention, innovation and actualised potential (Gurung & Kollmair, 2005). Following Ray Bush and Habib Ayeb (2012), it is important to inquire whether marginality can also be considered a site of liberation and alternative power. Moreover, Ghana Gurung and Michael Kollmair (2005: 10–11) stress two principal configurations of marginality: societal and spatial. While our intention is not to romanticise marginalised spaces, these may well encompass social
networks based on longstanding forms of mutual trust and reciprocity. Marginality can also promote and maintain alternative lifestyles and informal economic transactions in public life. As Reem Saad argues, “Marginality is a complex state and its impact on groups experiencing it is not straightforward” (2012: 109). In this light, the large numbers of young people and rapid population growth could also be seen as a resource, not only as a public expense and policy dilemma that generates challenges for job creation, housing policies and the educational system (Assaad & Rouhani-Fahimi, 2007). Meanwhile, immigration does not necessarily imply mere “brain drain”, but has the potential to generate cultural dialogue and rapprochement.

From social marginalisation to inventions: Recognising young people’s sociability, solidarity and social sharing

We use the 2011 popular uprisings – or the so-called “The Arab Spring” – as a point of reference to analyse how young respondents in the five AMCs reflect the changes in their socio-political conditions before and after it. For example, the Tunisian revolution in 2011 opened access to diverse associational activities while in Morocco and Algeria the popular hopes for systemic change materialised into limited political reforms. However, the initial enthusiasm and hope has gradually transformed into widespread senses of uncertainty since the consequent social changes have turned out to be less tangible than expected. In a focused ethnography, an 18-year-old woman reflects on the insecure situation in Tunisia:

She is worried about the general situation in the country after the revolution. Terrorism, life dearness and violence are the main indicators. Life is no more like before, she says, however, fortunately, there is freedom of speech. What goes on in Yemen, Libya and Syria is worrying relating to the future of the Arab world (TN_FE 3: 9).

The next example from the data collected in Lebanon also suggests how young people combine the sense of security with their future visions:

Many of the young people we spoke with shared similar narratives about the future: there wasn’t really any point in having an ambition because there was no real sense of security (LB_FE 2: 15).
In addition, the “youth bulge” – whereby some two-thirds of the AMCs’ population are under 30 years of age – represents immense labour force potential (e.g. Assaad & Rouhani-Fahimi, 2007). As an excerpt from a narrative interview in Morocco indicates, these resources are not currently taken into account in an efficient manner:

> There are a lot of people wandering in the streets, some of them could be key resources for the country, but we are not taking care of them. In some countries, structures exist to take care of them, coach them and help them to grow. (MA_NI 2: 7).

According to George Groenewold and Joop de Beer (2013) the population in the AMCs will grow from 280 million to 349–362 million people by 2030 depending on which socioeconomic scenario arises. By contrast, for example, it is estimated that the EU-27 will grow only by 21 million, from 500 to 521 million people, during the same time period.

The processes that promote social capital, equality and constructive accumulation of skills are significant for securing better living conditions for younger generations:

> The education system is considered unable to facilitate and empower future young entrepreneurs. Worse, as described by those young people, it kills potential creativity because of the teaching methods (learning by heart, no creative sessions, etc.). This, according to them, is true from primary school through to university, but the main weaknesses are languages, the lack of an approach to risk-taking and creativity, and the management of universities (MA_FE 2: 10).

The above excerpt from Morocco tells of wider youth frustration towards the current educational system that clearly emerged from SAHWA data. It is clear that young respondents consider their educational qualifications insufficient to meet the needs of the labour market. We shall return to this issue below. Simultaneously, many young people wish to pursue their hopes and life chances abroad. The potentials of social mobility and useful human capital can, however, be lost due to immigration.

> …many of our participants believed that there was little opportunity to pursue their jobs interests in Lebanon, and this was an incentive considering the options abroad. (…) Further research is required to explore in some depth the role of ‘imagining emigration” had in everyday youth perceptions of their future. However, initial discussion with our participants
indicates that the desire to leave was entangled with the sense of obligation to fulfil particular gendered exceptions. In other words, expressing the desire to leave to live abroad was about potentially becoming free of these obligations. In practice however, many could not – nor did they want – to leave because of their sentimental responsibility to family (LB_FE 2: 17).

The processes that promote social capital, gender equality and constructive accumulation of transferable skills are significant for securing better living conditions for younger generations at home and abroad. Human capital can be considered to be immense wealth if it is given the chance to express and develop itself:

On the one hand, some of the young women spoke (...) of the importance of equal opportunities between men and women. While on the other hand, it was significant that the young women and men that we spoke with also acknowledged that were many challenges faced by men to provide for their wives. The social pressure to buy a house and be the sole earner was mentioned by many of our participants. Some explained that young men often worked three-four different jobs (LB_FE 1: 17).

At the same time, several scholars have pointed to the phenomenon of prolonged adolescence among young people in the region. Due to structural obstacles and economic hardships, the youth in “waithood” face growing difficulties to make the needed transitions from education to the labour market to marriage, or to the roles and responsibilities that are considered part and parcel of social adulthood (Singerman, 2007). The phenomenon of waithood is, on the one hand, connected to educational opportunities and job security and, on the other, to the opportunities of establishing households and even civic participation (Salehi-Isfahani & Dhillon, 2008: 13). While the so-called “waithood generation” and the ways in which it envisions the future at large generally implies negative and pessimistic connotations, it may also hold the potential to construct alternative, more hopeful scenarios.
INSIGHT 1. ALGERIA: The “hittistes”

According to Gurung and Kollmair (2005), marginalisation can also be seen as a dynamic process that can lead to inventions, innovation and potential. In this sense it involves both societal and spatial dimensions of liberation. In this context, marginalised youth can also experience intense forms of solidarity, social sharing and civic activities, as the ethnographic material on the Algerian “hittistes” underlines:

This group of hittistes has strong solidarity ties due to their contribution to the same concerns and, as some of them told us, they grew up together, which is why they are solidarity and help each other automatically to the point that they can share the little bit they earn or own. The photograph shows that meaning in so far as we see friends sharing the special Ramadan meal we usually share with our family. It is a mixture of social and religious ritual. Thus, some conclusions can be drawn from the photo:

1. Hittistes sometimes organise activities and practices that have a deep meaning with regard to their social links and group integration.

2. They occupy spaces that they took as territory which they identify as such.

3. Despite the lack of resources, this did not prevent them from creating social activities.

4. We note the emergence of sociability through the simple activity that they have done, maybe thinking that society has marginalised them. (DZ_FE_1: 6).

Source: DZ_FE_1, 2016.

From economic marginalisation towards a more equal share for young people

In addition to social marginalisation, young people living and growing up in the AMCs face challenges accessing the national labour markets as well as the global economy. According to Colombo (2010), economic factors are closely linked to the questions of welfare levels
and access to infrastructure as well as the state provision of basic welfare services, education and policies aimed at job creation. In this regard, youth opportunities are also shaped by external factors, such as regional and global economic competition, climate change and efficient infrastructure. According to the World Economic Forum (2011), strengthened cooperation between Mediterranean countries and societies is essential for guaranteeing substantial societal reforms in the region. Additionally, a UN survey on economic and social developments in Arab countries recommends that regional economic integration would help to prevent potential conflicts in the future (2016: 100). There should be more cross-society and cross-sector cooperation in order to address socioeconomic inequalities looming in the 2030s.

In Morocco, the seeming passivity of youth in the rural areas features the neglect of the state

Even though these young workers in agriculture have aspirations and want to change their current situation, it is paradoxical that they seem politically amorphous. [...] About the uprising in 2011 Rachid explains that there were some protests organised in Fes, but not in Ain Taoujdate. People took to the street to protest against the settlement of a factory but “nothing changed”. [...] The loss of confidence in formal political institutions could explain this attitude. But the question remains. The people of the region could not take collective action in order to improve their living conditions. [...] The populations are poor, with a very low educational level, they do not belong to trade unions or political parties, they lack health insurance (MA_FE_1: 15–16).

However, incidents such as the death of Moroccan fish vendor Mouhcine Fikri in the small northern city of El Hoceima in late October 2016 can spread and instigate uprisings around the country gathering masses while lacking coordinated planning. On the one hand Algeria has few natural resources and scarce arable regions and can be described as a rentier state (see: e.g. Lowi, 2009) that receives most of its income from oil and gas. This possibly decreases the efforts to develop a more versatile market economy, functional institutions and a less sparsely-managed state. This is indicated in the next example from a rural area in Algeria:

“We have no economy, we depend on oil. We import more than we export, we do not have productive companies, even resources enjoyed by the country, for example, agricultural land,
are unexploited, at least to provide needs of people and not to resort to import, but the state does not support this sector” (DZ_FG_7: 7).

“There are some young people who are interested in agriculture and ranching, but the state does not support them … young people generally avoid the agricultural work, because it is tiring, they prefer easy work, working in offices and administrations even they do not have qualifications for it” (Ibid.).

Though education seems to face various challenges to meet the demands of today’s labour markets, it is at least socially regarded as something positive. Schooling may give more possibilities regarding future planning, as the following narrative interview from Algeria shows:

Only a few of them are studying, while the others are doing nothing. For the most part they left school because they had no one to encourage and direct them, others are poor and others hate studies and school and were excluded. The glaring lack of opportunities in the resort, as it exists in large cities and towns, highlights a truth of a bitter taste when knowing that there is no work for young people outside agriculture which is their only chance, knowing that the major factor of social inclusion is work (DZ_NI_2: 7).

But what if diplomas and educational qualifications do not match the needs and job offers in the labour markets? In Algeria, for example, the educational system generally lacks appreciation, except among the older generations, which push young people to work instead of planning their future livelihoods:

There are no job opportunities, since some states “I prefer not to study hard and get a good job”. This indicates that young people prefer today to work rather than to study, as you find a young man who has obtained a BA and works as security staff “So, you do your studies and at the end you find yourself among no educated people”. You find someone who has not studied holding a position he has no right to get it, and find someone with an educational level hanging around in the street. “Nepotism”: Everyone emphasized that instruction or education has not relations with peers. One among them declared saying, “We study for our parents not for ourselves, but if we thought positively we might find that we study for ourselves because it is our future” (DZ_FG_2: 3).

According to the youth interviewed for the SAHWA Project, recruitment and job opportunities are characterised by nepotism instead of merit, which hampers their integration
into the labour market in both public and private sectors. Young graduates, in particular, complained that their university degrees often matter less than their personal connections when looking for a job. Having little personal or familial connection (or _wasta_) to meaningful jobs, they call for a more meritocratic society where a person’s connections do not define their possibilities of pursuing their career aspirations and future life chances.

In the SAHWA Youth Survey 2016, one of the questions asked of young respondents was: “Are the following systems good or bad for governing your country?” The three given options were: 1) “A system led by a strong group that depends neither on parliament nor elections” (named “Strong unpardamental group” in the chart); 2) “A system where experts – and not a government – take decisions on what is best for the country” (named “Experts” in the chart); and 3) “A regime in which representatives depend on and should be accountable to the citizens” (named “Representatives of citizens” in the chart).

As the results indicate (see Table 1), in all five countries “A regime in which representatives depend on and should be accountable to the citizens” was the most selected alternative, and the first alternative “A system led by a strong group that depends neither on parliament nor elections” was the most unfavourable. In Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon more than 90% of respondents believed that “A regime in which representatives depend on and should be accountable to the citizens” was a very good or good alternative. The results from Morocco differ from the other countries in this regard. Almost 40% of young respondents think that “A regime in which representatives depend on and should be accountable to the citizens” is either bad or very bad. On the other hand 45% of respondents in Morocco think that “A system led by a strong group that depends neither on parliament nor elections” would be a very good or good system.
### Table 1. Are the following systems good or bad for governing your country? (%)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Strong Unparliamentary Group</th>
<th>Experts</th>
<th>Representatives of Citizens</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Egypt</strong></td>
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<td>Very good</td>
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<td>Experts</td>
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<td>Experts</td>
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<td><strong>Lebanon</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Morocco</strong></td>
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Source: SAHWA Youth Survey 2016.

If the human capital potential were fully used, the results regarding prosperity and welfare could be more promising, as these two young Lebanese say:
You graduate from university, then [you need] wāṣṭa [i.e. connections] to find a job – and you have to if you want enter in the work you want and do the speciality you want, then you need to have a base … so if you want to become an engineer then you need to have the training from an engineer and so on and forth … but you also need connections … (LB FG 1: 13).

You could be working as a machine … passing your years and getting tried just to leave the factory or the company or manufacturer…and be a number on the inventory. I am scared of these experiences and I also worried about something else too … that people arrive at this stage and realize these aren’t real (justified) opportunities in this country and that chances and opportunities are hard to come by in this country, there isn’t going to be any peace … and this really upsets and worries me … both these things. The (political) and economic system are crappy in this country (LB_FE_2: 16).

Young respondents in Egypt also emphasise the importance of wasta in finding a job:

Some of the participants believe that it is the job market nature that determines their future. Even if they take courses and attend training programs, they might not find the job they are searching for in the end, and will accept whatever job that they find available. Two of the participants confirmed that they are not working in their field and that practically their degree did not help them (EG FG_2: 3).

In Egypt the job market and young people’s individual pathways were forcefully framed by the division between the public and private sectors. Working in the public sector was a prevailing aspiration for the majority of the Egyptian youth. They acknowledge that it offers low salaries but, at the same time, the public sector job has several benefits. The latter include social and medical insurance, pension schemes, stable monthly income, set working hours and annual holidays, but also a certain prestige in society. In the interviews young people mentioned how some of their parents also insist on their future-son-in-law working in the public sector, since it secures a stable income. In this sense, having a degree is also a social obligation that is connected to one’s chances of marriage and parenthood (EG NCS). On the other hand, it is difficult to land a job that matches one’s education or personal aspirations, and there are few prospects for professional advancement. Some women would also acknowledge that it will be the role of their future husbands to earn the income for the family in the future.
On the other hand, private sector jobs in Egypt provide opportunities for higher income in the future, but job security is much more volatile in terms of stable pay and working conditions. Due to the low income levels in the public sector, many would prefer to have a secure public sector job in the mornings and a second one in the private sector in the afternoons and evenings in order to have an additional salary. Working in the private sector may also involve unpredictable working hours, lack of holidays, unstable pay and a lack of social benefits and medical insurance. Only a few big companies, often international, are able to provide similar schemes of social and medical insurance to those found in the public sector.
INSIGHT 2. EGYPT: Everyday challenges in the private/public sector

In the qualitative data on Egypt, setting up one’s own business or start-up is a common aspiration for many, since it holds the promise of being one’s own boss, and of lucrative income if it succeeds. The main challenges in this regard were securing the initial capital, doing the paperwork in order to become a legal entity, as well as the risk of losing one’s money and savings. Also, for businesses, becoming profitable requires having a reputation locally and some young women expressed that their husbands or parents would not endorse their aspiration to run their own business. The issue of working conditions and aspirations to higher positions are thus in many ways connected to existing resources, age and gender. In a narrative interview, a young Egyptian man tells of his own experiences when setting up a business of his own:

“We asked “Alaa” if he ever thought of opening up a private business of any sort. He replied by confirming that he currently has a running shared business with one of his colleagues selling clothes, and it is working until this very day quite well. We moved on to ask Alaa about the types of problems that he might have faced in the process of opening up. Alaa responds firstly by reporting the problems in pricing. To open up and stock a collection, Alaa claims that he requires between 15,000–20,000 LE. The problem Alaa faces is in the initial price that is usually expensive, and therefore difficult to convince the end user that this is the normal price for the products. The business has become more difficult with the closure of the free trade zone in Port Said where we used to get our stocks. Another time, Alaa narrates that they were on their way back with a shipment from a place known as “Kantara” were they were stopped, and their stocks hijacked ... We followed on to explore other problems that Alaa had faced during his experience in private business and what he did to overcome any hurdles. Alaa notes that the number one problem is the initial investment and the accumulated overheads that are paid before you start the project. Alaa notes that in his case he had taken a loan from “Bank Misr” to actually start the business. Alaa then narrates that he embarks on a difficult journey to obtain the required paperwork to start his business. He explains how it was very difficult and bureaucratic to attain a license for his shop. He also notes that it is common to find shops that are not registered due to the tedious process they have in place. Alaa has a negative view on the government in that regard, he says that the government only opens its eyes on those who are starting up and want to build themselves legally, they actually hurdle the work. Alaa also notes that the governmental monitoring bodies always come to visit the shop at around 9pm, which is basically a rush hour in terms of customers in the shop, driving them away. Alaa narrates an example from his neighborhood. A shop that specializes in selling footwear was shut down and the owner had stocks taken away by the police and government monitoring bodies, under the claim that he has two hundred flip-flops that do not match the safety standards and specifications. A warrant was issued with the case and he had to pay a fine of fifteen thousand pounds. Why does this have to happen to a person who 15,000 pounds will be detrimental to his shop and career? Alaa adds “someone like this is sitting in his shop, avoiding all kinds of problems, and just wants to live off his business why does he have to go to jail, and pay a fine that brought his business to an end”. Alaa notes that this shop is now out of business and probably has no source of income today” (EG_NI_1: 5).
INSIGHT 3. MOROCCO: Sustainable development is a necessity

The future scenarios related to climate change in the Mediterranean region are versatile. Accurate patterns that can predict how the region will be eventually affected do not exist. According to Xenidis, Martinez Espinar and Prokova (2009), some results from the experiments indicate that “temperatures over the region as a whole could rise by about 3.5°C between today and the latter half of the 21st century”. In this scenario, the sea level will simultaneously rise by one metre and people living in the coastal areas will gradually be obliged to relocate elsewhere.

According to the UNDP Human Development Report 2007-2008 Egypt, Lebanon and the countries of North Africa in general could be those most affected by climate change (Arab Human Development Report, 2009). What does it mean for residents in both rural and urban areas? What is the impact of desertification on agriculture? What is the role of economic growth on climate change in general? The estimated effects of climate change on water resources and management in Africa (Chika Urama & Ozor, 2010. Statistics compiled using: www.nationmaster.com) include the following:

- In Algeria, mountainous areas are subject to severe earthquakes; in addition there will be mudslides and floods in rainy season.
- Egypt will undergo periodic droughts, frequent earthquakes, flash floods, landslides; in addition a hot, driving windstorm called khamsin will occur in spring; dust storms, sandstorms.
- In Morocco the northern mountains will be geologically unstable and subject to earthquakes; in addition there will be periodic droughts.

SAHWA ethnographic data shows how entrepreneurship among youth is at times connected to efforts to induce positive changes in their country, region or even globally. One example is a 22-year-old female from Morocco. She is a nascent entrepreneur developing solutions for water supply with the aim of optimising the processes of waste water management:

"The problematic of water in the world raised questions in her mind, especially when she sadly said that “children die every nineteen seconds because of water diseases. A billion of people on earth don’t have access to water. Something has to be done, I cannot, at my level, let this kind of horrible things happen in my country”. Her commitment to entrepreneurship is strongly linked to embracing a cause: “I cannot do anything if the cause is not important in my eyes”. [...] The more we listen to Kaoutar, the more we understand that beyond the entrepreneurial implications in terms of personal benefits (freedom, emancipation, achievement, making money...), she is stimulated by the social cause of water access and achieving her goals collectively. “We cannot develop a company alone, it’s a team work.” And this team of “young guns” is ambitious. In fact, they are thinking seriously in exporting their Moroccan success story in Sub-Saharan African countries, because in this area, the water issues are more critical on one hand, and on the other hand, Morocco supports companies to implement their activities in the African continent, by facilitating procedures and by giving relevant information on local issues like networks, customers, suppliers, distribution, prices. This is the next big challenge for her: “for me the future is not so far away, I am doing things, and that’s the way! The future is not here yet... By doing and acting, the results will come, that’s the equation for me. It is good to dream, but it is better to do.” For her, water is not only “blue gold” as some people want to call it, water is above all life” (MA_LS_1: 8 & 9)."
We close this section by analysing Table 2, which indicates what young people regard as the biggest problem in their countries of residence (SAHWA Youth Survey, 2016). The table highlights the four predominant answers out of 13 options in each country. In all countries, the economic situation, people’s standard of living and jobs were most often selected as the biggest problem. These three problems are also highly intertwined, and therefore we highlight them in green. In Egypt, these amounted to 74% of the responses, in Tunisia 65%, in Algeria and Lebanon 55%, and in Morocco 46%.

In addition, there are differences by gender, social class, parents’ level of education, urban or rural residence, and age. In general, young men were more likely to select the biggest problems among these three intertwined issues than young women. In Egypt, Morocco and Lebanon, youth living in rural areas selected one of these three highlighted problems in comparison with their peers living the cities. On the other hand, there were no significant differences between the urban and rural youth in Algeria. Moreover, one of these three
problems – economic situation, peoples’ standard of living and jobs – was selected in Egypt, Algeria and Morocco relatively more rarely among those respondents who perceive their social class as higher. In Morocco, one of the three problems was emphasised less by the youngest age group (15–19-year-olds), but less by the oldest age group (25–29-year-olds) in Lebanon. In Algeria, there were no notable differences between age groups in this regard.

From political marginalisation towards young people as decision-makers at all levels

If the youth were considered passive and menacing actors before 2011, and afterwards as mythical revolutionaries fighting for freedom and justice, today, five years after the Arab Spring they are once again in general depicted as a passive, marginalised social category. This may not be the full picture. We begin this section with results from the SAHWA Youth Survey 2016 (without Lebanon and Algeria, as these questions were not answered in these two countries) where young people were asked about the changes in their countries’ political situation before and after 2011 (Tables 3–5).

### Table 3. Political rights in Tunisia currently and before 2010–2011 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Right</th>
<th>Before the events of 2010-2011</th>
<th>Currently</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Currently everyone is free to say what they think.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently everyone can enter/join political party, organisation or movement</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently all ordinary citizens can influence the government</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently corruption in the political parties and the state is under control</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently people can live without fear of being illegally arrested</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SAHWA Youth Survey 2016.
Table 4. Political rights in Egypt currently and before 2010–2011 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very bad</th>
<th>2-4</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Currently everyone is free to say what they think.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before the events of 2010-2011..</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently everyone can enter/join political party, organisation or movement</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before the events of 2010-2011..</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently all ordinary citizens can influence the government</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before the events of 2010-2011..</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently corruption in the political parties and the state is under control</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before the events of 2010-2011..</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently people can live without fear of being illegally arrested</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before the events of 2010-2011..</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SAHWA Youth Survey 2016.

Table 5. Political rights in Morocco currently and before 2010–2011 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very bad</th>
<th>2-4</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Currently everyone is free to say what they think.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before the events of 2010-2011..</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently everyone can enter/join political party, organisation or movement</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before the events of 2010-2011..</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently all ordinary citizens can influence the government</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before the events of 2010-2011..</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently corruption in the political parties and the state is under control</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before the events of 2010-2011..</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently people can live without fear of being illegally arrested</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before the events of 2010-2011..</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SAHWA Youth Survey 2016.
The current situation of political rights in Tunisia is experienced as considerably worse than in the other two countries. Depending on the question, the current situation is considered to be very bad (at the negative end of the scale) by 74–90% of respondents. We are aware of the challenging political situations in Tunisia and Egypt when the survey data was gathered. In Tunisia the state of emergency law was put in place in November 2015 after several terrorist attacks, and extended several times (and is still ongoing). The law allows, for example, the banning of strikes, meetings, temporary closure of theatres and bars as well as measures to control the media. It is possible that the lack of confidence about the current situation (see Table 3) has to do with the state of emergency law. Egypt was without a parliament 2012–2015 and, in January 2016, the Egyptian parliament finally convened. On the other hand, there was some reluctance among young respondents to speak about their political stances or participation, as some seemed to “fear to announce that they are affiliated to a certain political or social group” (National Case Study, Egypt: 16). In comparison with Tunisia and Egypt, the changes reported by respondents in Morocco were much smaller. There are moderate changes towards more positive views of the situation in all five dimensions. On the whole, the current situation as well as the situation before 2010–2011 are seen, mainly, as better in Morocco than in the other two countries.

On closer inspection of the survey data, there were differences in the averages of answers according to different background variables when analysing the questions concerning the current situation altogether (sum variable) and the averages concerning the situation before 2010–2011 altogether (sum variable). The data indicates that Tunisian youth living in rural areas regard the current post-2011 situation on average somewhat more positively than those living in urban areas. The situation before the so-called Arab Spring was reported a bit more positively among urban youth in Tunisia while in Egypt, by contrast, the situation before the events is seen a bit more positively among the rural youth. In Egypt, the young respondents defining themselves in the upper class experience the current situation more positively than those defining themselves as middle or lower class, while the situation before 2010–2011 was experienced most negatively in the middle class and most positively in the lower class. Also, respondents whose parents have higher or secondary level education are experiencing the current situation a bit more positively than young people whose parents’ highest educational level is primary or middle, while there is no significant difference among young people whose parents have no education.
In Morocco there are more differences on average: the experience of social class, parents’ highest level of education, urban/rural residence, gender and age all have an influence (though not very big) on the averages of the experience of the current situation and some of these also influence the evaluation of the situation before the events of 2010–2011. When the experience of social class is higher, both the current situation and the situation before 2010–2011 are evaluated better. Respondents whose parents have no education are experiencing the current situation more negatively than others, and the situation before 2010–2011 is rated most positively among young people whose parents have primary or middle education. In urban areas the current situation was described as a bit better than in rural areas, while there are no differences between these groups when estimating the situation before 2010–2011. Women’s experience of the political situation is more positive than that of men both currently and before the events. The youngest age group (15–19 years) is experiencing the current situation a bit more positively than the middle age group (20–24 years), while other differences between age groups are not significant. Interestingly, the results of the Arab Youth Survey 2015 show that in North Africa 57% of young people think that things in their country are going in the right direction, while 36% think things are going in the wrong direction.6

As Table 3 indicates, the current situation in Tunisia is considered to be worse than the situation before 2011. This may come as a surprise to many, and it may also partly be a “nostalgia effect”: in the qualitative interviews some young respondents expressed a longing for earlier times, and would like to have more authoritarian leaders again, even hoping for a society such as that which existed in the 1960s, before they were born:

Young people, he says, are not confident in the future any more. One just to have a look at the politician elite on television, to realize their mediocrity. He thinks that we lack men, leaders, with an innate sense of politics. To him, Ben Ali was an example as well as Hitler, even though he insists on his disapproval of the ideas of then second one. He considers Hitler as “a great historic personality”, what he did for his country, no other leader could do (TN_FE_3: 12). He dreams of seeing the upcoming elections give birth to a government formed of “brave men” who would be able to “destroy everything and rebuild everything! In all fields, culture, infrastructure, education!” (TN_FG 2: 8).
As our Algerian colleagues reported (BP Algeria, 2016), today, young Algerians have very negative perceptions of politicians and their activities. These attitudes concern both the national government, headed by an aging president, and the political parties, be they in government or opposition. Young people generally stay away from electoral politics and campaigns, and neglect the idea of voting. The SAHWA Youth Survey 2016 showed that more than 70% of the respondents did not vote during the last elections. More than 37% asserted not being interested in politics, about 10% declared that voting does not have any effect and more than 7% of them justified their position by the fact that the elections are neither just nor transparent. Even in terms of information, young people are little interested in political activities and do not follow current political events. The SAHWA qualitative research team found that young people have a deep feeling of being excluded from society and that nobody listens to them (BP Algeria, 2016).

The old regimes keep on maintaining the old established order, which prevents the youth from identifying and constructing new political positions, roles and even purposes:

Algerian youth don’t have any role in the decision-making in order to change the current situation for the better. Even if they want that by engaging in political parties and associations, the higher authorities would not allow them to do so … their voices are not inaudible … For this reason they resort to vandalism and chaos to express their views and positions. Politics is preserved for politicians in our country, they issue decisions that are not consistent with the needs of the people, that’s why youth haven’t confidence in politicians … in a country where the majority of people are young, it is supposed to leave the priority for youth in political activism (DZ_FG_7: 10).

In Lebanon, the special feature of sectarian governance emerges often in the ethnographic materials, although the main point of criticism remains similar:

[...] the kind of society that comes from this current regime is one that naturalises religious sectarianism (or it is natural for this system to impose religious sectarianism on people) and that you become an obeying sheep (goat) to the political zaim (leader) … and you can’t get work in what you do because it goes to those employers who have wasta … and this is what brings despair and discontent (LB_LF 1: 13).

However, young people often participate in everyday processes of social exchange and collective actions that can be considered latent participation beyond the formally structured
political institutions. From their marginal position they develop alternative identities in order to challenge the established order. As Asef Bayat (2013: x-xi) states, young people “do not sit around passively obeying the diktats of their police states, nor did they tie their luck to verdict of destiny. Rather, they were always engaged, albeit in mostly dispersed and disparate struggles in their immediate domains of their everyday life” whether taking place in the neighbourhoods, work places, on street corners or Facebook walls.

The upper-middle-class youth were often visible at the forefront of demanding rights and freedoms during the 2011 uprisings. But in the end many have faced several challenges to organising themselves into effective political groups, including internal strife, lack of coordination and popular support, as well as state intervention and restrictive legislation. In the main, the AMCs continue to be governed by the elder generations and established political elites (Merlini and Roy, 2012: 5). If the active youth participate against the will of those in power they face restrictions. In addition, in some cases civil society actors face accusations of destabilising the social order in line with foreign interests. In a focus group discussion in Egypt:

One of participants who works in the association explained how the projects within the association were affected. Before January 25th, the association used to work on a large number of projects but after the uprisings, suspicions about foreign funding of NGOs were raised, a number of NGOs were forced to stop their activities and the association started working on a smaller number of projects (EG_FG_2: 7).

It seems that young people consider the conventional ways of “doing politics” to be outdated and ineffective while new forms are yet to fully emerge. The latter can be traced from a number of youth initiatives that have taken place since 2011. For example, in Lebanon a succession of youth-led campaigns have regularly challenged the dominant political elite and the sectarian order it has embodied since 2010. Taking the forms of street protests (the You Stink! movement in 2015 against waste management and corruption), peaceful demonstrations (the Laïque Pride in 2010 against the confessional regime), or municipal electoral platforms (Beirut Madinati in 2016), these have at times succeeded in gathering young people into collective actions. They have addressed a number of key societal problems such as corruption, poor management of the state welfare system and sectarianism,
but have failed to transform the prevailing institutional order. These cases nonetheless hint at the fact that the youth are already functioning outside the formal institutional channels. At the same time, the opinions are rife among young people with regard to the meanings and purposes of civic engagement and political participation, too:

The conversation was then moved to discuss political participation as part of civic engagement, more than half of the participants believed that political participation constitutes as part of civic engagement but not the only thing, as developmental work and charity volunteering is part of it as well. “I believe that the fact that I adopt a political opinion and political direction that I have read in and made is on its own civic engagement, I’m participating with my opinion.” Another believed that it is not about having a political opinion but rather about creating unbiased political awareness, one does not have to be engaged politically through building opinions but through helping others create their own. The participants have all done that through the NGO, which made them discuss the importance of NGOs. “It is (NGOs) the link between the government and the different social classes.” In light of the role of NGOs in the Egyptian civil society the participants started discussing the corruption in NGOs financials. The major issue discussed was financial corruption related to funding of NGOs. When asked about political participation; many overall showed decreased interest in the past year in participation, and not many were planning on participating in the parliamentary elections. However, a couple have participated in supporting candidates in their campaigns, while others participated in awareness campaigns encouraging people to vote while the rest around 5 out of the 12 said they were not interested in politics generally anymore. “There is a phase of letdown and people after have been excited on standing for their political and civil engagement rights specially after the elections have ended, people had high hopes but they did not see any change at the end, it has all been erased (EG_FG_4: 7).
The crucial question regarding future developments is what opportunities and capacities young people have to create new political cultures, and when and in which spaces these may
emerge. Should they remain marginalised from formal avenues to political participation, they may easily continue to actively distance themselves from the power structures they believe do not defend their preferred futures. Instead of active political engagement, some choose to focus on studies or career-making, while others prefer to migrate abroad for work and better life chances. It is also important to acknowledge that for still others building better futures may encompass radical anti-systemic attitudes and readiness for violent action:

Searching for fortune abroad is found as the most sinister expression by jihadists. ‘Walid’ paints the Jihadist candidate’s profile experienced in the South, and that is not very different from D jihadists elsewhere: it is about young the juvenile delinquent, uneducated, disgusted of alcohol, exhausted by unemployment. “He falls into the trap of those who make him believe that thanks to Jihad, he would go to paradise after death. I know someone who used to be a drunkard, then all of a sudden, he started to pray and let his beard grow. He said to his family that he was going to Tunis, then, he called them from Turkey, telling them that he was getting prepared to enter Syria ...” To this increasingly common fate in Tunisia, ‘Walid’ provides the following explanation: “If he had found a job here, he could have lived quietly, he would made his prayers and quietly return home”. This social phenomenon is explained in different ways. ‘Saloua’ believes that the lack of religious culture among young people leads to their exposure to become easy charms to sellers of hope, who are the sheikhs responsible for identifying the weak candidates for Jihad. She regrets that young people have superficial religious knowledge as a result of frustration endured during the former regime, she said. Hence, they will not be able to resist orators who talk to them about “their misery and they tell them that they will support their families once they are in Syria, and do not know what else … but there is another way! Perhaps threat! Yes it is the POWER of discourse! Yes! Religious culture is what we miss!” (TN_FG_4: 4 [names anonymised]).

In this light, when trying to find explanations for questions of youth radicalisation and terrorism, it is important to go beyond mere cultural features and religious conviction. It is also constructive to pay attention to socioeconomic factors, individual pathways and alternative preferences with regard to future scenarios. There are many possibilities for addressing the intertwined issues of marginalisation, exclusion and radicalisation in the AMCs. In this context we want to highlight the UN Security Council’s Resolution 2250 on “Youth, Peace and Security” as the Security Council’s first and historic attempt to urge member states to increase youth representation in decision-making at all levels (United Nations, 2015). The Security Council also called on member states to consider setting up
mechanisms that enable young people to participate meaningfully and non-violently in societies, especially in peace processes.

At the same time, several initiatives exist – from civil society campaigns and state-sponsored programmes to international cooperation – that aim at involving youth more meaningfully in public political processes. For example, in Morocco, the British Council has launched the YAANI Programme “Youth Arab Analysts Network International”, active since 2011, with Chatham House. The aim of this programme is to train future Moroccan policymakers and analysts in order to “enable them to contribute significantly and effectively to the development of their communities” (BP Morocco, 2016). Similarly in Egypt, the Presidential Leadership Program launched in 2015 gathers a selected number of future youth leaders into dialogue with politicians and public policymakers. Also, the National Youth Conference in October 2016 resulted in initiatives that address the problems of educational reform and the large number of young imprisoned detainees. In December 2016 the European Union and Tunisia launched the EU-Tunisia Youth Partnership focusing on promoting education, employment, economic growth, regional development and youth mobility. The EU has pledged to make funding for these initiatives available for 2017–2020. In the cases above, it remains to be seen whether these programmes involve yet more new patterns of inclusion and exclusion, and to what degree they incorporate new generations into national decision-making processes.
Insight 4. TUNISIA & MOROCCO: Street art

When the Tunisian research team were asked to analyse the new forms of youth engagement (BP Tunisia, 2016: 7–8), they underlined that young people in Tunisia have developed new ways of engagement through modern information and communication technologies and social networks, with new means of expression that show the extent of their citizenship spirit and responsibility. In physical streets and public spaces artistic expressions such as rap (and other styles of music) and graffiti became the primary means of expression for young people, reflecting “their attitudes and opinions towards the social and political issues debated in the democratic transition phase” (ibid.: 7).

Actually, these changes represented a kind of social shock because of the audacity in their criticism of policies, corruption and other aspects of marginalization, poverty and joblessness. Thus, public spaces and walls were transformed into a stage for celebrating the revolution or inciting people to revolt and rebellion. Within the same context in July 2011, emerged the group of graffiti “Zwewla” with the Logo (Z); this was in a time of political challenges related to youth social and economic priorities with a variety of hard political attitudes towards the revolution objectives. Indeed, these young people [...] raised political slogans denouncing political recruitment on the one hand, while trying to re-position themselves in the political and media landscape after having been crucial actors in control of the change tools, which started since 2011 and bearing societal dreams, on the other hand.

Since 2011, young people have used the public space to present and perform creative art, engaged art or “Street Art” as it is also called. This engagement is based on taking over public spaces to express themselves and to criticise. At the same time, it has been claimed that the “youthful spaces” of political engagement effectively keep younger generations away from the political authorities.

Even if not heard or understood by elder generations, the street art may still be an important element for the young generations. In addition, street art can be a source for business as is the case in Morocco. As ethnographic fieldwork data from Morocco suggests (as in the Insight 3) entrepreneurship can be combined with political engagement and the potential for social change:

For him, the entrepreneur must be flexible enough to understand the needs and take care of people with different agendas. That’s how and why he is dealing with working with Moroccan street artists. Thus, the business model Sami chose is not any kind of business. Giving a legal voice to street artists is for him a way to let the Moroccan youth speak and be listened to. “The Arab spring made us understand that young people in Morocco had something to say, and that street artists were actually trying to do so” (MA_LS_3: 10).
Discussion

In March 2016 we asked our research colleagues working in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon what their projections were for the future in their countries. If current trends continue in their country, what will the future of youth political engagement look like? We received following answers:

Youth continue their cultural engagement mainly. Some young people who were very active in The 20 February Movement are now active journalists or artists. Many are also engaging in politics, by taking the elections opportunity. Some others have chosen the exile or have launched more organized social and cultural movements, either with political goals (Anfass) or just for the sake of keeping activist. And the vast majority is online. […] Moroccan youth […] Internet use is] linked to interpersonal communication, personal reputation and career building. In this survey, political mobilization comes as the fourth reason explaining why youth go online. While not being predominant, it is noteworthy that mobilization online is considered as the most effective one, when it comes to political activism. For example, the withdrawal of digital law draft by the minister of industry and digital services, after a large ban campaign online by youth shows how much this is still considered as a good way to impact policies (Morocco).

Given that associations are the ways in which young people appear to be able to engage with the state, they will continue to engage politically through NGOs […] My assumption is based on the following [conditions]: 1. Young people in Lebanon continue to believe in the relevance of engaging with the state to bring about social change. 2. The Syrian conflict does not spill over into the country (Lebanon).

• NGOs and different civil society organizations are the main door for youth
• These organizations should be utilized and more involvement with youth is required
• Youth empowerment is not only through offering high hierarchy positions in ministers, rather in giving them space to innovate and work in the society and that is done through civil society organizations (Egypt).

A quarter of [a] century after the first experience of free elections since the independence, the “disenchantment” of the young people towards the politics is always strong. It even seems to be passed on from generation to generation. The twenty-year-old young people today did not know the events of the beginning of 1990s, but they have the same indifference towards the politics as their elders. From this perspective, nothing indicates a change in the level of political commitment of the young people, because it is about a confidence break. The problems which face the young people: unemployment, housing, bad-life and added to the difficult relations with the administration and the
local authorities strengthen the resentment of the young people towards the government and towards the whole political life (Algeria).

We also asked if they could imagine some alternatives to their predicted or feared future scenarios. If they changed some of their assumptions, what alternatives could emerge? In our colleagues’ answers violence and conflict as well as apathy are uncertain drivers of the future:

There is a large tendency towards ordinary violence. The term, *tcharmil*, referring to youth from poor neighbourhoods, using knives and swords and willing to look like richer youth, show to what extent inequality is at the core of the political tension and that existing policies of development are not responding enough to these requests. […] It is not only youth policies nor youth participation to politics that may change this configuration. There is a need for more youth centered national policy putting education, employment and entrepreneurship at the heart of the general dynamics (Morocco).

Young people in Lebanon completely lose faith in the state and consider other methods of engagement (Lebanon).

Finally, our last question was “what is your preferred future of youth political engagement in your country”. To this specific question we only received one answer:

More youth engaged in daily activities in their neighbourhood, in cultural associations, and in parallel, more initiatives to echo their requests at the macro political level. There is a need for new confidence bond to give the political sphere more credit (Morocco).

These remarks correspond to the concerns that Professor Scott Atran (2015) highlighted in his speech at the UN Security Council in May 2015, namely the need to open up the future horizons for youth in order to restore their confidence in their environment and the possibility to engage in something meaningful, not only being tossed by the expectations and rules of the labour market economy. From another perspective, Colombo (2010: 2–3) stresses the qualitative differences between what she calls sustainability and stability. In her view it is possible to achieve stability without sustainable development, which means “the ability of the state – understood as both institutions and processes as well as norms and values – to pursue progressive development in various sectors for current and future
generations”. While the sovereignty may not be challenged, however, from socioeconomic and political perspectives the state is left outside the development and the major question here, again, is: for whom? Who benefits and who does not? In order to achieve sustainability one should consider the governmental structures as well as ideational assets including both natural resources as well as manmade assets.

To conclude with the words of one young Tunisian informant, at this time it is highly relevant to continue imagining a better future, to have courage and not to give up, and try to continue the democratic processes in the country and in the region:

When our parents get through difficult moments we do our best to help them, it is the same case of Tunisia, she is our mother and the law is our father, we must do everything to save them! (TN_LS_6: 9).

**Recommendations**

The paper recommends that more substantial regional cooperation and conflict resolution is needed in order to achieve social, economic and political sustainability and the construction of young people’s preferred futures. Therefore we frame the following recommendations with reference to the “Alliance scenario” as developed by Silvia Colombo (2010), which outlines positive future prospects predicated on increasing cooperation between AMCs and the EU-27 countries (Groenewold & de Beer, 2013).

1. **Coherent policymaking is needed to tackle youth marginalisation.** Young people face marginalisation at multiple levels. The processes of social, economic and political marginalisation are intertwined, and they cannot be settled independently from one another. Therefore, youth policy planning in different sectors (e.g. education, employment, housing, family planning, and healthcare), whether at national, regional or EU level, should aim at policy coherence remembering that young people are the most affected.

2. **Young people should be involved in decision-making processes that shape their future lives.** In the main, young people are disengaged from public political processes.
As inheritors of today’s pursuits, their sentiments and views should not only be heard, but young people must be included in institutional decision-making processes from early on. In this regard, the adaptation of the National Youth Policies and National Civic Councils of Youth Organisations, namely, the National Youth Councils, should be encouraged and, if needed, facilitated through Euro-Med youth co-operation. These participatory processes should be genuine and inclusive, regardless of socioeconomic background, ideology, gender or regional differences.

3. **Measures should be made to build confidence in political institutions among the youth.** Young people are highly suspicious of political institutions, whether national, international or non-governmental. To address this general lack of trust, it is important that political institutions (including the establishments/EU) are self-reflective and evaluate their power positions, accountability, and actions in building genuine participatory processes, especially in contexts of fighting corrupt and nepotistic practices.

4. **Solutions to youth marginalisation need to involve cross-sectoral cooperation and policymaking.** Several current trends and challenges, such as environmental change, immigration, and youth radicalisation go beyond national borders. At local level, solutions require cross-sectoral cooperation between civil society, public authorities, and businesses. Regionally, more cross-border cooperation is needed. In Europe, the youth with AMC origins represent an immense resource with important experience and knowledge of local realities.

5 Each young individual needs a meaningful life and future and a non-violent environment in which to engage meaningfully. A secure environment where young people are able to develop their own individual skills and plan a future is a necessity in order to achieve everyday practices of meaningful life. This can take place only alongside sustainable social, economic and political development.
References


**Data**


BP Egypt (2016). Youth political engagement. Additional information. The American University in Cairo (AUC).


National Case Study. Algeria. (2016). Centre de Recherche en Economie Appliquée pour le Développement (CREAD) / SAHWA research project.

National Case Study. Tunisia. (2016). Center of Arab Woman for Training and Research (CAWTAR) / SAHWA research project.


SAHWA Ethnographic Fieldwork 2015 datasets from Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Lebanon and Egypt (consists of narrative interviews, focus groups and life stories; for more information visit footnote 2).


SAHWA Survey - Tunisia (2016). Center of Arab Woman for Training and Research.

SAHWA Survey - Egypt (2016). The American University in Cairo.


Endnotes

1. In quotations from the qualitative data we use the codes: DZ = Algeria, TN = Tunisia, MA = Morocco, EG = Egypt, LB = Lebanon, FG = Focus Group summaries, FE = Focused Ethnographies, LS = Life Story summaries and NI = Narrative Interviews summaries.

2. It is important to note that though we present the country data from five different countries in combined pictures the data has not been scaled. Therefore statistical differences between different countries cannot be analysed. In other words, the significance of differences can only be counted inside each country with different variables. Numbers of respondents: Tunisia N=2000; Lebanon N=2000; Egypt N=1988; Morocco N=1854; Algeria N= 2036. Data corpuses are weighted to represent the youth population of each country. Background variables used in analysis are gender, age, social class, parents’ highest level of education and stratum of residence. Gender: Tunisia, Lebanon and Morocco: female 50%, male 50%; Egypt: female 52%, male 48%; and Algeria: female 49%, male 51%. Age groups: Tunisia: 15–19 (30%), 20–24 (35%), 25–29 (34%); Lebanon: 15–19 (39%), 20–24 (24%), 25–29 (37%); Morocco: 15–19 (34%), 20–24 (34%), 25–29 (32%); Algeria: 15–19 (32%), 20–24 (37%), 25–29 (31%) (year of birth 1986–2000). In Egypt the age variable has not been analysed in this report because the year the data was collected is unclear (born 1985–1999). For social class we have used the young people’s answers of their experience of their own social class. The question was: “Compared to people your age, how would you class yourself? Scale: 0 = the poorest … 10 = the richest”. From here we formulated three categories 0–4 = Lower, 5 = Middle and 6–10 = Upper. This resulted in: Tunisia: lower 30%, middle 48%, upper 22%; Lebanon: lower 37%, middle 29%, upper 35%; Egypt: lower 36%, middle 42%, upper 22%; Morocco: lower 38%, middle 27%, upper 36%; and in Algeria: lower: 34%, middle 34%, upper 32%. For both father’s and mother’s level of education there were five categories: “No education”, “Primary”, “Middle”, “Secondary” (in Egypt “Secondary/intermediate”) and “Higher”. These were classified for three categories: “No education”, “Primary/Middle”, “Secondary/Higher”. This resulted in: Tunisia: no education 14%, primary/middle 55%, secondary/higher 31%; Lebanon: no education 4%, primary/middle 41%, secondary/higher 55%; Egypt: no education 42%, primary/middle 19%, secondary/higher 39%; Morocco: no education 42%, primary/middle 36%, secondary/higher 21%; and Algeria: no education 29%, primary/middle 42%, secondary/higher 29%. Stratum of residence: Tunisia: urban 68%, rural 32%; Lebanon: urban 77%, rural 23%; Egypt: urban 40%, rural 60%; Morocco: urban 60%, rural 40%; Algeria: urban 61%, rural 39%.

3. The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Community’s Seventh Framework Programme FP7/2007-2013 under grant agreement no. 613174 for the SAHWA Project (www.sahwa.eu). This research project brought together researchers from both shores of Mediterranean, belonging to 15 research institutions.

4. Differences analysed by cross tabulation, all differences reported are statistically significant (tested with a Chi-square Test). In the case of Tunisia, differences according to background variables were not able to be analysed because of incomplete data. The age variable was unclear in the case of Egypt, and was not used.

5. Sum Variables “Currently” and “Before 2010-2011”, scale 5–25. Cronbach’s Alpha: Tunisia: currently 0.644, before 0.716; Egypt: currently 0.811, before 0.734; Morocco: currently 0.890, before 0.902. Only statistically significant differences in averages reported. The age variable was unclear in the case of Egypt, and therefore was not used. Method of analysis: One-way analysis of variance.

6. The 7th Annual ASDA’A Burson-Marsteller Arab Youth Survey 2015 was conducted by international polling firm “Penn Schoen Berland (PSB)” to explore attitudes among the Arab youth in 16 countries in the Middle East and North Africa: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia and Yemen. The survey did not include Syria due to the civil unrest in the country. PSB conducted 3,500 face-to-face interviews with Arab men and women (50:50) in the age group of 18 to 24. The interviews were completed in Arabic and English (source: http://www.slideshare.net/ASDAABMPR/7th-annual-arab-youth-survey-2015).
The SAHWA Project ("Researching Arab Mediterranean Youth: Towards a New Social Contract") is a FP-7 interdisciplinary cooperative research project led by the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB) and funded by the European Commission. It brings together fifteen partners from Europe and Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries to research youth prospects and perspectives in a context of multiple social, economic and political transitions in five Arab countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon). The project expands over 2014-2016 and has a total budget of €3.1 million. The thematic axes around which the project will revolve are education, employment and social inclusion, political mobilisation and participation, culture and values, international migration and mobility, gender, comparative experiences in other transition contexts and public policies and international cooperation.