

Policy Report

YOUTH POLICY IN ARAB MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This report is a review of the youth policy in five Arab Mediterranean countries (AMCs): Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon. It builds upon two main sources of information: official policy documents and qualitative data from focus groups with stakeholders conducted by local teams under the framework of the SAHWA project funded by the 7th FP of the EC. Based on desk research it examines the definitions of youth and youth policy, institutional structure, legal regulations, resource allocation and forms of young people's involvement in policy making and implementation. Word cloud and thematic analyses provide a more in-depth look at the issues debated and positions taken by various groups of stakeholders in youth policy: policy makers, youth practitioners, managers in business associations and civil society organizations and young people in various locations throughout those countries. The report outlines common features of the youth policy in AMCs in which youth participation still remains a promise rather than a reality, the dominant image of youth is that of a problem and an expensive burden for society, strong centralization without much community and civil society engagement, the family as the main institution offering support for youth transitions, the emphasis placed on general education and sport while major social inequalities such as regional, gender and class disparities are not effectively addressed.

Key words: youth policy, young people, stakeholders, state regulations, image of youth, perceptions of youth problems

1. Introduction

The youthful image of the prominent mobilization waves in the Arab Mediterranean countries in 2011-12 directed international attention to Arab youth and their life prospects and aspirations. The refugee waves that followed of mainly young people from the region towards other Arab countries, Turkey, Europe and beyond gave new impetus to media representations, policy interventions and research analyses. Inside the region, political elites adopted youth issues in their official discourse, offering promises for ‘empowering’ youth in the context of economic liberalization reforms involving a significant reduction of government spending, distorted by corruption and clientelism (Sika, 2016; Kovacheva et al, 2016).

This report offers a review of the youth policies of Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt and Lebanon since 2011. The leading research question concerns the recent status and perceptions of youth policies in AMCAs in a broader comparative perspective. Three sub-issues emerge: (1) how youth and youth policies are constructed in the official state documents in the 5 AMCAs; (2) what are the institutional structures of state provision for youth transitions; and (3) how is the involvement of civil society organizations, the family and other sources of support for young people perceived and practiced in the post- ‘Arab Spring’ realities¹.

2. Theoretical framework

Youth policy is a concept embedded in larger economic, social, cultural, political and even geopolitical contexts. Denstad et al (2016: 15) provide the following definition: “A national youth policy is a government’s commitment and practice towards ensuring good living conditions and opportunities for the young population of a country”. It includes regulations and provisions of a diverse character – from legal rules through policy principles and measures to more concrete strategies, plans, programmes and initiatives. The definition does not indicate the variety of actors and institutions involved in the design and implementation of the youth policy aside from the state: various civil society organizations, youth associations, trade unions, business associations, charitable societies, churches. Local communities, parents and friendship circles also provide support for youth transitions to adulthood and are therefore important stakeholders in youth policy. Young people themselves are involved to varying degrees in the decision making, implementation and evaluation of the country’s youth policy and should also be part of the concept as youth policy stakeholder.

Comparisons of national youth policies usually result in the creation of typologies which follow the ones implemented for the welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Kersbergen and Viz, 2013; Buhr and Stoy, 2015). However, these typologies often ignore the specific ways of providing protection and promotion of young people’s social and economic wellbeing in developing countries. Based on the existing categorizations of youth policies in the academic literature (Walther, 2006; Wallace and Bendit, 2009), we can distinguish between the following youth policy regimes:

- *Universalistic* – characteristic of the Nordic countries, with universal coverage of young people and a dominant vision of youth as a resource;
- *Neo-liberal* – typical for the UK and Ireland, relying on minimum centralized state intervention and community-based provision, perceiving youth as a problem;
- *Conservative* – representative for some Central European states and marked by employment and social-integration-centred welfare.

Youth policy typologies usually accept the introduction of a fourth policy model (Gallie and Paugnam, 2000; Chevalier, 2016):

- *Sub-protective* – corresponding to the southern European states, strongly centralized and low in coverage through state intervention.

Walther (2006), Wallace and Bendit (2009) and most of all Roberts (2010) concede that there might be a fifth, post-socialist type in the countries of Eastern Europe:

- *Post-communist* – characterized by reducing state support, increasing family dependence and market orientation of youth policies.

In order to better understand and contextualize youth policy developments in AMCs, we attempt to see how these policies relate to the above ideal types and what distinctive features we could ascertain of the youth policy in the region. Academic literature on AMC youth policy both before and after the revolutionary wave is not abundant. We know more about the social contract of the authoritarian regimes with the population at large and some indications on how this has changed with the emergence of new social actors (Achy, 2015) but less about the policies designed for youth as a target group. Jawad (2012) has pointed out the difficulties in classifying welfare provision in the region due to lack of precise data and blurred concepts.

3. Methodology

This report builds upon evidence from research of youth transitions in five AMCs: Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt and Lebanon. Research teams from those countries, in cooperation with academics from some European countries led by CIDOB in Barcelona, Spain, designed a complex research model including focus groups, narrative interviews, life stories, participant observation and a representative survey of 2000 young respondents in each of the five countries. The combination of different methods allowed us to draw a more nuanced picture of young people's life transitions as well as giving us an understanding of their life conditions "not only as structures of opportunities and constraints but also as a result of processes of negotiations, meaning making and agency in Arab Mediterranean youth" (Sanchez Garcia et al, 2014: 38).

In order to answer our research questions, we conducted desk research and analysis of official documents and academic literature about youth and youth policies in the region. The thematic analysis outlines three main concepts: youth policy, youth involvement and priority of youth issues. We consider them not in a static manner but diachronically, over time, in order to capture changes and developments. The understanding of how they are developed

and implemented in AMCs necessitated an examination of the *strategies of intervention* of the respective state (which is the target of the youth policy, which are the declared policy objectives and chosen priority areas), and the created *institutional structures and opportunities* (which are the governmental agencies involved in youth policy, how do they coordinate their activities, how do they cooperate with young people themselves and their organizations, and what resources are invested in policy implementation). Such a pattern of analysis builds upon a combination of the Denstad model for youth policy development (Denstad, 2009; Denstad et al., 2016) and the model for public policy evaluation (Knoepfel et al., 2011).

In this report, we counterpoise these official discourses and policies with the perceptions and social representations of the main stakeholders in the field as displayed in the focus groups carried out within the framework of the project by local teams. The survey data and life stories of young people were analysed in a wide array of thematic policy papers (Lane et al, 2016; Cherubini et al, 2016; Göksel et al, 2016) and the national policy papers (CREAD, 2016; Korany et al, 2016; Omrane, 2016; Fakhoury, 2016). The focus groups as sources of empirical evidence have the advantage in comparison with those obtained by other methods that they present the dominant discourses of policy makers, youth practitioners, managers and employees in civil society organizations and young people as the main stakeholders in youth policy.

There are significant limitations in the analysis of the translated focus group texts, as they cannot reach the full depth of local meanings and connotations. We supplemented the results from the word cloud analysis with thematic analysis of the transcripts and the links that the participants had created between them. We also verified our findings with the analyses presented in the national policy reports of the country teams.

In the next paragraph, we first present the overview of the legal regulations and institutional structures, formal objectives and practical approaches in the official policy documents in the five AMCs and then provide the results from the analysis of the perceptions and social representations of the stakeholders in youth policy in each country.

4. Strategies of intervention

4.1. The concept of youth

Effective policy strategies in supporting young people need well-defined target groups. In the 5 AMCs there is a wide variation of meanings attached to the concept of youth and varying age definitions.

In Morocco, the National Strategy for Youth provides an explicit definition of youth: “The concept of “youth” refers to the stage of life between childhood and adulthood. Youth is a special time of life that not only means greater biological and psychological maturity but also the individual's process of integration into the social community. During this period, young people are called to develop the skills and capacity to take on social roles in all

spheres of human activity. Typically, this process lasts until they reach a sufficient level of independence, social responsibility and independence.” (Strategy Morocco, 2014: 2)

In governmental documents and statistical data presented by official bodies (including a reference framework for national youth consultations), this stage of life is usually fixed between 15 and 29 years of age, which corresponds to the European standards. The Strategy also accepts 15-29 because of stating that at the age of 24 youth transitions to adulthood are usually not completed in Morocco for too many people (87.5% still single, 81% living with their parents, 65% NEETs). In some cases, the upper limit for youth age is raised to 35, making some measures and programmes still open to socially excluded and disadvantaged people (Rhanem, 2015: 3). Finally, there is a political definition of youth for election purposes: 21-40 is the age reserved for people to be elected as MPs as a part of the so-called youth quota (ibid.: 4).

Youth is not clearly defined in official governmental documents in Tunisia. The traditional focus of youth-oriented state programmes usually fixes the age limits between 15 and 25 (Churchill, 2013). Other documents cite the 15-29 bracket (Floris, 2010a) or even refer to the group under 40 as a target for some initiatives. It seems that existing Tunisian policies tend to conceptualize youth most of all in terms of “marginalized” and/or “unemployed” groups of the population that should be helped to reach minimum levels of normal life and subsistence.

Algerian authorities seem to apply a just biological definition of youth. The Ministry of Youth and Sports generally uses the 18-30 age period while the Ministry of Employment raises the upper limit to 35 (Rarrbo, 2010a: 10). In larger political terms, young people are increasingly treated as a patriotic reserve of the nation, i.e. a group which is to conduct the “battle for development” and reaffirm the country’s main values (President, Algeria, 2016).

According to the National Youth Council in Egypt, youth is defined as the 18-30 age period. Recently, various state measures oriented to young people widen this bracket to involve people between 18 and 35, the most popular example being the Participatory Development Programmes in Urban Areas. A 2013 law stipulates that members of governing bodies of NGOs dealing with youth and sports should be no older than 45. The 18-29 bracket is present in some policy recommendation documents drafted with regard to youth transitions (see Report, 2010, Preamble).

The Lebanese “Document of the Youth Policy”, referring to international standards, defines youth as the people belonging to the 15-29 age bracket, which is estimated to correspond to some 27% of the total Lebanese population. The definition is, moreover, based on “social and economic criteria” and is designed to treat the youth “not as a physical force only, but as a brain that is characterized by its openness to newness” (Lebanon youth policy, 2012: 4). However, expert reports often claim that the youth has no separate identity or some distinctive characteristics of a legal nature within Lebanese society (Rossis, 2014: 10). The country’s Constitution allows for the discrimination of social groups only on the basis of confessional divisions (Rarrbo, 2010b: 11). Besides, definition of youth comes effectively to be associated with Lebanese national youth in an exclusive manner, since foreigners and refugees, whose number has increased greatly since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, have not been incorporated into the system of services provided for young people. This also

excludes Palestinian youth residing in Lebanon despite some youth NGOs' efforts to incorporate it.

Summing up, we can conclude that the AMCs' youth policy starts from a narrow definition of youth, excluding children, while tending to increase the upper age limit to above 25 and often till 35. Youth is targeted as a whole group rather than specifying particular subgroups of disadvantaged youth.

4.2. Objectives set in laws, strategies and programmes

Most AMCs responded to the youth revolts in 2010-11 by rapidly drafting new regulations in the field of youth policy, with Morocco taking the lead by adopting a new Constitution in 2011. The dominant discourse in the new strategies and programmes focused on a broadly defined goal – youth wellbeing.

The Moroccan youth policy is established under the 2011 Constitution. Youth policy is directly addressed in Art. 33 of the text where an Advisory Council of Youth and Community Action is envisaged. The most important document in the area of youth policy is the “Integrated National Strategy for Youth 2015-2030: For a civic, enterprising, happy and fulfilled youth” (Strategy Morocco, 2014) whose drafting took several years and two phases of public consultations. The strategy is focused on education, employment, health services and youth participation. The reason behind its adoption is the observation that the majority of young people aged 15-29 (constituting 30% of the country's entire population and 44% of people of working age) have been excluded from economic growth in Morocco since the early 2000s, and the Arab Spring has shown the depth of exclusion felt by the youth.

Besides the strategy, several laws frame the contours of state youth policies, all of them following the Arab Spring and the adoption of the new Constitution (Rhanem, 2015: 9-12). In the sphere of political participation, we should especially emphasize the 2011 Organic law for Parliament which stipulates that in the lower chamber there be 30 seats reserved for young people, thus urging political parties to draw up their election lists to reach these levels. Also, the 2011 Organic law on political parties fixes the legal age for creating a political party at 18; the same year's Election Code determines 18 as the voting age and 21 as the age of running for elections (instead of the earlier 23).

There is no consolidated legal framework yet for youth policy in Tunisia. The new post-revolutionary Constitution adopted in 2014 pays attention to young people in its very beginning, under Art. 8, which proclaims the importance of youth as a driving force in the building of the nation. The text's only other youth-related provision reads that young people should be represented in local authority councils (art. 133).

Currently there is a public initiative to establish a platform for gathering various claims and problems of young people so that they can be discussed by national authorities and serve as a background for a future holistic national youth policy (Stafford, 2016). Encouragement for youth political involvement can be found in the new election law, which provides that political parties should nominate at least one person under the age of 35 among the top 4 on any electoral list (Silveira, 2015). Young people are eligible to vote and create and be a

member of an association at the age of 18, while the minimum age for being elected a Member of Parliament is 23. All these provisions existed prior to the Arab Spring uprisings.

The current 1996 Algerian Constitution mentions youth twice, in the chapter on citizens' rights. Young people's living conditions should be guaranteed by the state (Art.59), and it is the state's responsibility to provide protection of family, youth and childhood. According to electoral legislation, the minimum age of membership in Parliament is fixed at 28, while voting is possible at the age of 18. The new Electoral Law promulgated in 2012 is presented by many as a response to the Arab Spring upheavals in terms of facilitating political participation, but expert judgments deny the importance of the change and see only marginal differences compared to the previous system (NDI, 2012). Similarly, a new law on associations was passed in the immediate aftermath of the Arab Spring, in January 2012. Although claiming to widen opportunities for involvement in public life, in practice it restricts activities of non-registered structures but also enriches the occasions for the state's suspension or denial of registration of NGOs (HRW, 2014). In the 2016 Prime Ministerial decree for the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the aim of Algerian youth policy is defined as meeting the expectations of young people, particularly in animation, mobility, free time management, leisure and relaxation. The youth policy should strengthen national identity, promote socio-professional integration (to counter the risks of marginalization) and encourage associations. Special emphasis is put on "initiatives from below" implying dialogue with organized youth. The Algerian youth community residing abroad is referred to as an important group for maintaining a dialogue with and provides supportive measures for its development and self-affirmation.

There have been several half-successful attempts at drawing up a consolidated youth strategy in Egypt since the very beginning of the 21st century. The current constitution was put to a popular referendum in January 2014 and in its Preamble makes explicit and extensive reference to the lessons and stimuli provided by the Arab Spring uprisings. Moreover, the "uniqueness" of this revolution is explained by several factors, among which the "significant role of youth who aspires to a bright future" is ranked second. Art. 82 reaffirms the state's commitment to young people's development. The Constitution also stipulates for quota representation of young people in local government: one quarter of the seats in local councils should be reserved for candidates under 35 (Art. 180). As for the legislature, basic law determines that youth, Christian Copts, workers and farmers, persons with disabilities and Egyptians living abroad should be represented on a quota principle in the House of Representatives (Art. 244). The December 2014 electoral law fixes the number of seats allocated to youth at 16 (out of 567) (Morsy, 2015). There are also some important steps aimed at rejuvenation of the executive branch: since 2014, each minister in the government has to appoint two young associates between 30 and 40 to assist them in the political and administrative work.

According to a 2013 statement by the Egyptian youth minister, a draft law on youth is under discussion in government but we still do not have information on the current status of the draft.

The "Document of the Youth Policy" (Lebanon youth policy, 2012) is the key strategic text in the sphere of youth issues in Lebanon. It was prepared over a long consultancy period and finalized with the support of the Youth Forum and the UN Task Force. In April 2012, it was promulgated by the Lebanese Council of Ministers. The document's ambition is to introduce

measures stopping discrimination against youth by treating young people as “citizens with full rights” (ibid.: 4). It recognizes a single non-state organization for collaboration therein: the Youth Forum, and pedantically describes the functions and structure of the Forum. The state’s commitment to youth policy is presented in five dimensions: demography and migration; labour and economic participation; education and culture; health; social integration and political participation. Only in a few cases are concrete governmental units mentioned as responsible for carrying out the necessary measures to reach the strategy’s goals. Vague responsibility, absence of deadlines, exclusion of female youth and generally wishful thinking stand among the chief criticisms that the document faced (Harb, 2016: 9).

As to political participation, the reform of the election law was planned but failed to be furthered in Parliament. 21 remains the minimum age for voting (Factsheet Lebanon, 2014) and, besides, voting is connected to the place of birth. In the turbulences and internal migrations resulting from the civil war, this measure restricts a lot of opportunities for making an electoral choice.

The AMCs still need a more developed legal base for their youth policy and more concrete strategies defining how the ‘bright future’ for youth can be achieved in practice. The state policy focuses more on protection and prevention of social problems rather than on youth autonomy and participation.

4.3. Main problems of youth and areas of intervention

AMC youth policy aims to cover all domains of young people’s lives: from education to employment, health and leisure. In some countries, such as Morocco and Algeria, achieving literacy for all is still a challenge, while in Tunisia and Lebanon the main issue is the quality of education in all types of schools. Everywhere youth unemployment is a major policy concern.

For the Moroccan government, large numbers of illiterate population on the one hand and unbalanced regional development on the other constitute the main challenges for the country. Therefore, education, investment in poor regions and unemployment come to be central in youth policies (Floris, 2010b: 11). Generally, the social and economic condition of youth has been treated with higher priority than the civic involvement of young people and the issues of youth participation.

Increasing inequalities in the course of Tunisia’s post-independence development put education at the core of state youth policies (Paciello *et al.*, 2016). In a liberal reading, the education-employment link has been recognized as vital by the authorities and leads to an abundance of measures and programmes in the areas of job creation, youth entrepreneurship and facilitated bank crediting to young people (World Bank Tunisia, 2014). Also, there are some actions oriented at better access to political information and citizens’ rights as well as reducing increasingly higher emigration abroad: for example, large-scale projects trying to improve relations between local authorities and youth organizations, or the decision by which the Tunisian diaspora was given a representative quota in the Parliament.

The 70% of the current Algerian population that is under 30 easily explains existing problems with training, education, employment and healthcare prevention. Not accidentally,

education and employment measures come to the foreground for the government. When speaking of youth policy as a specific sector, the focus actually falls on the four priority areas outlined in the Prime Ministerial decree for the Ministry of Youth and Sports (animation, mobility, free time management, leisure and relaxation). Participation is not included.

By presidential decree, 2016 was named “Year of the Youth” for Egypt and a large governmental programme was announced to support young people’s innovations in the sphere of knowledge. In a retrospective sense, innovations tend to be among the persisting priorities of youth measures, together with sports, tourism and recreation. From Mubarak’s era onwards, the state’s relationship with youth has actually differentiated between two types of young people: “liberal” and “radical”. Consequently, measures oriented to them have been gravitating to co-optation in the former case and containment in the latter, and it has remained more or less the same even after Mubarak’s ousting (Sika, 2016: 5). Limited coverage and also the non-targeting of important groups such as poorer young people and young women characterize this approach. (ibid.: 11).

Projects and initiatives funded by the Lebanese state within the framework of the national youth policy belong predominantly to the spheres of sports and scout groups. The political discourse is centred on two broad areas: youth migration and youth unemployment. Although both are recognized as critical problems of the Lebanese youth, there is not much work being done in these directions through the existing institutional instruments (ibid.: 6, 10). They are partially addressed by foreign actors such as the UN and its agencies, the EU and the World Bank in their programmes. Keeping in mind the country’s general poverty, the devastating consequences of the civil war and the current tensions with neighbouring states (and within neighbouring states!), the role of international factors turns out to be of significant importance, especially in dealing with health problems and youth entrepreneurship.

5. Institutional structures and opportunities

Traditionally, AMC policy-making has been hierarchical and this is valid for the sphere of youth policy as well. Governments are at the top of the youth sector’s hierarchical structure, controlling the formulation and implementation stages while policy evaluation is rather neglected. Civil sector representatives have been included only in the implementation phase, while young people have been more or less excluded. In the past five years governments everywhere have made efforts to consult youth and give more opportunities for youth representation in policy.

5.1. Governmental agencies

The chief governmental unit in Morocco responsible for conducting, coordinating and implementing youth policies is the Ministry of Youth and Sports², whose current structure and aims were developed in 2013.

There are other public bodies which are also directly involved in youth policies (Rhanem, 2015). We should mention the ministries of national education, of employment, of health, and of the interior. Several offices are in place to encourage youth activities, incl. organizationally and financially: Entraide Nationale, the National Initiative for Human Development, the National Council for Human Rights, the Agency for Social Development, and the Economic, Social and Environmental Council among them. Both mentioned Councils were established in 2011 in the wake of the thoroughgoing reform of the Moroccan state during the Arab Spring, while other institutions have a longer record of existence. No specific parliamentary committees or local and regional bodies devoted to youth issues exist. The Ministry has some 75 delegations across the country, which are just administrative units of the national institution.

An important consultative institution which was explicitly established under the new Constitution is the Advisory Council of Youth and Community Action. However, it took several years for turning the constitutional provision into reality by finalizing a law on this organ. The law was passed by the government on 30 June 2016 and proceeded to Parliament for ultimate approval (Zaireg, 2016).

The Council's main task will be to express opinions on issues that will be referred by the authorities, to contribute to governmental projects and strategies, to promote youth participation and community work and conduct research on issues of youth and community work. The new Council will be expected to develop a charter and a framework for voluntary work, and to issue recommendations for the promotion of youth and improving conditions for voluntary work.

The governmental structure that has to deal with youth issues in Tunisia is the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Unfortunately, its internet site is very poor in important information about the government's main priorities in this area and the activities that are undertaken. All one can see is that the Ministry puts its focus on sports rather than youth. In terms of youth policies and programmes, the Ministry provides services in a highly centralized manner relating to the administrative division of the country³. The key instrument is the state network of youth centres (316 in towns and 224 in villages, as of 2014) (World Bank Tunisia, 2014).

The national legislature's composition – both structural and personal – does not generate the impression of making youth a priority. Under the first post-revolutionary elections in 2011, 79% of the members of the Constituent Assembly were 40 years old or more while just 4% were under 30 (which corresponds to fully 51% of the population under 30). This fact, together with the (dubiously realized, obviously) obligation of political parties to include young candidates on their lists, comes as a further disappointment for young people and strengthens their conviction that the system is not working to their benefit.

The idea of a Youth Advisory Council exists but has not reached a point of elaboration and implementation as yet. Some ultimately unsuccessful efforts in this direction were undertaken in 2012 by 217 youth representatives from all governorates across the country in the form of a report to the Constituent Assembly (World Bank Tunisia, 2014).

A number of institutions have been created over the years to address the incumbent socioeconomic problems of the young generation: The National Solidarity Fund, the National Council of Youth and the National Youth Observatory. Scholars emphasize that all

of these structures were in tune with the dominating state course of prioritizing the private sector and, moreover, that access to their products was by and large conditional to political loyalty to the ruling Ben Ali regime (Paciello *et al.*, 2016). Local activists deny the legitimacy of the youth-oriented institutions, especially the National Council of Youth, precisely because of their preponderant alignment with the former dictatorship and its personnel (Chebby, 2014).

The leading Algerian institution dealing with youth issues is the Ministry of Youth and Sports, which was created as far back as 1964, shortly after independence. Its current structure and goals were established through a Prime Ministerial decree in 2016⁴. According to the document, the Minister of Youth and Sports develops the elements of youth policy and ensures their implementation, monitoring and control. The Minister is obliged to propose multi-sectoral coordination or some consultative organ.

The Ministry's youth infrastructure is composed of an international network of youth hostels as well as the so-called offices for the wilaya youth (the most common acronym for them being ODEJ). The latter are established according to a proposal of the wali of the given wilaya (province) and, according to official data, have a complete coverage of the country in each of the 48 wilayas. These offices are responsible for implementing programmes relating to information, communication, youth work and management and generally own facilities such as youth centres, youth hostels, multi-purpose rooms, youth camps and sports complexes.

On a legislative level, both chambers of the Algerian Parliament have specific committees dealing with youth issues.

Algeria still does not have a local or national youth council as a body for dialogue and coordination between institutions and young people's associations. A previous attempt actually did not prove to be a success since it comprised mainly representatives of youth sections of leading political parties and thus lacked real representation and independence. A second attempt at establishing a genuine Higher Council of Youth, however, could be observed in governmental plans for many years (Rarrbo, 2010a). An April 2015 statement by the Ministry of Youth and Sports envisages the intention of creating the Council in the near future (Ministry Algeria, 2015). In July 2016, a special presidential message was dedicated to young people, promising the imminent appearance of the Council (President, Algeria, 2016).

The institutionalization of youth policy in Egypt reflects the complex relations of authorities with young people over time. In past decades it went through creating, uniting and splitting numerous institutions before the establishment of the current Ministry of Youth and Sports in the context of the Arab Spring uprisings. Since its functions, prerogatives, positions within the executive and even its name have varied greatly, it did not manage to reaffirm itself as a leading actor in the promotion of youth policies (Sika, 2016: 8-9). Nevertheless, the Ministry has secured a wide network of youth centres all over the country (their number palpably increased in the last years of Mubarak's regime) with different facilities such as libraries, sports courts and technology rooms as well as youth hostels, which were also developed during the same period⁵.

In the area of youth policy, a crucially important role is that of the ministries of education and vocational schools on the one hand and of manpower and migration on the other. The

former is engaged in developing vocational training as a key tool for combating rampant youth unemployment, while the latter proposes measures aimed at facilitating young people's migration abroad as an instrument for both reducing unemployment and raising foreign income for the country's economy. At the legislative level, there is a special Committee for Youth in the House of Representatives.

The leading Lebanese institutional actor in the field of youth policy is the Ministry of Youth and Sports. It was established in 2000 as a successor to several agencies (committees and departments, chiefly related to sports) under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education. Since its promotion, the Ministry has been charged with “youth and sports affairs in relation to organizations, clubs, federations, open-air activities, scouts, opportunities, camps, volunteer camps, youth groups, scout groups, local and international sports groups as well as related programmes and centres” (Harb, 2016). A department for youth, separate from that of sports, was created within the framework of the Ministry as late as 2009⁶. No coordinating structure such as a Youth Council has yet been established despite existing recommendations.

5.2. Coordination between policy sectors

In the respective countries, different governmental bodies possess spheres of competence that are related to youth issues besides the principal agents in youth policies, the ministries of youth and sports. Generally, these bodies deal with important areas such as education, employment and child protection.

Prior to the adoption of the Youth Strategy in Morocco, coordination of youth policies belonged to the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Now, within the framework of this document, a more complex scheme has been launched (Strategy Morocco, 2014: 27-28). There is a proposal for the establishment of a new institution, a Ministry reporting to the head of government responsible for youth issues (not realized yet), as a general coordinating body. Also, an inter-ministerial committee for youth should monitor cooperation between different power units. Based on its work, quarterly updates and annual reports for the progress of the Strategy's Action Plan are to be prepared. The Advisory Council is to concentrate on monitoring and evaluating the activities of youth organizations in order to comply with the Strategy's objectives, including through creating networks and partnerships with them. Local governments participate through encouraging youth associations and local youth councils. In general, central and local governments are obliged to provide the necessary administrative, material and financial resources, and civil society is supposed to support their efforts. The ambition to strengthen coordination here is clearly at hand, although one could have doubts about the effectiveness of this multi-level distribution of institutional responsibility.

In Tunisia, youth issues belong predominantly in the field of competences of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. A number of other governmental units are also involved in drawing up and implementing youth policies in the spheres of child protection, employment and education (Paciello *et al.*, 2016). They are all subject to the general state policy without any specific mechanism for coordination between them. “Fragmented coverage, ambiguity and

overlap in roles”, states one recent assessment of the institutional network for the youth policies (Chebby, 2014).

Along with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, several other governmental units are involved in the Algerian youth area policy: the ministries of national education, of higher education, of national solidarity and of justice. They still lack an official mechanism for cooperation or a specialized body for synchronizing or coordinating their actions. There is only a convention for institutional cooperation on disabled young people.

As mentioned, within the framework of ODEJ, the Ministry of Youth and Sports requires cooperation from local governance institutions.

Despite the more or less efficient functioning of various bodies relating to youth policy in Egypt, no officially established coordination mechanisms among them are to be detected, either on a national or a local level. Only during the strengthened activity of a government-driven Youth Council in the late 2000s was a group of experts from different institutions formed to discuss the possibilities of a youth law, but it led to no agreement and effect.

The chief actor responsible for the coordination of policies in Lebanon is the Ministry of Youth and Sports. It chairs the so-called Higher Committee, which is composed of representatives from 13 ministries that touch on youth issues in some way. However, there are indications that coordination processes exist on paper rather than in reality. The only mechanism which has proved its relative efficiency is between the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Youth Forum. At the same time, the Ministry’s limited number of staff (30 people, according to a 2014 report, see Rossis, 2014: 16-17) undermines its capacity to implement policies and, moreover, to coordinate them. If one can speak about coordination activities, they can more likely be found in the interaction between different confessions and political parties, which are constitutionally forced to cooperate in order to effectively govern the state. Thus, government institutions are rather a kind of executive for changing political configurations and deals at the top.

5.3. Cooperation with civil society and youth involvement

In the Moroccan Strategy, young people and youth NGOs are recognized as an important stakeholder in the process of drawing up and implementing youth policies. Several institutionalized forms of youth inclusion emerge (see also World Bank Morocco, 2012). First, young people’s voice is supposed to be heard through their representatives in the Advisory Council which is soon to be established. The approval procedure of its members, however, lies entirely with the arbitrariness of the respective public bodies, which suggests a top-down approach. Second, local youth councils realize youth inclusion in a more decentralized manner and close to the local communities. There are around 50 such councils (as of 2015), which do not yet cover the whole of the country’s area. Besides, they lack a clear legal framework for functioning or coordination between them. Third, youth NGOs display a gradually increasing trend in number and scope (according to the World Bank, higher than in other MENA countries). As of 2015, some 3,000 organizations of this type can be labelled youth NGOs according to international standards because of the lack of legal

definition. Mapping these NGOs and assessing their contribution is a difficult task which is not yet being done properly⁷.

Tunisian youth played a particularly important and globally recognized role in the revolution that toppled the Ben Ali regime in 2010-2011. January 14, the day the dictatorship was overthrown, is now celebrated as an official holiday under the significant name of “Revolution and Youth Day”. So one should expect young people to be treated as a leading actor in the development of post-revolutionary Tunisia. Things, however, are not as they should be.

No actual system of co-management has been developed in Tunisia as yet. On some occasions, consultations with young people have been conducted by the state authorities but they have no regular basis. Establishing NGOs was substantially facilitated as far back as the 1990s by a law prescribing a simple authorization procedure. The Tunisian Union of Youth Organizations has served as an umbrella structure for such youth-led NGOs and has been responsible for coordinating their activities and their representation at the National Council of Youth. However, the closeness of this association to the Ben Ali regime heavily undermined its legitimacy and now it cannot be said that it functions as a real “spokesperson” for youth claims and needs (Floris, 2010a: 22-23).

A widely-shared observation is that Tunisian young people are not much involved in organizational activities although the number of youth-led CSOs has gradually risen in recent years, with a relatively good presence in the capital Tunis and a much underdeveloped network in the periphery which, in its turn, reveals low administrative and financial capacity (Churchill, 2013). Non-voting in elections is another related problem (World Bank Tunisia, 2014). Education in citizens’ rights in this regard is another important function of some of the Tunisian NGOs, where the biggest importance is accorded to “I Watch Tunisia” (Silveira, 2015). In poorer and underdeveloped regions of the country, recent years are marked by the rise in both number and activities of youth religious welfare organizations (World Bank Tunisia, 2014).

The role of the Algerian civic sector in the youth area is officially recognized and encouraged on various levels. Even the head of state recently called for more active young people’s and youth associations’ participation in public life since “Algeria needs their opinion”. Numerous youth-led and youth-oriented NGOs exist, some sources even put their number at 81,000 (Algeria factsheet, 2014), but no common framework or network is to be found uniting them in initiatives and enterprises. Some prominent organizations (such as the Rally for Youth Action) rely on funding by international donors and especially UN and EU programmes. Their scope of action usually touches on spheres such as democratization, human rights, citizenship.

Another type of NGOs are the ones more closely associated with the government and the ruling parties. They receive support and funding from the state budget and are often officially institutionalized as “partners”.

For decades, the Egyptian youth has been directly engaged in politics in various forms, including protests and strikes. The whole of Mubarak’s period could be classified as an alternation of rapid politicization followed by appeasement. Since the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011, groups of young people have made persistent efforts to transform street activities

into fully-fledged political participation through coalitions of youth movements, youth-led political parties and rejuvenation of existing political formations, with no substantial success (Abdalla, 2013). Low youth turnout in elections is telling enough.

Youth NGOs also played a vital role in the 2011 January Revolution and all the processes it unleashed. Then the youth part of the civic sector faced a double challenge, mainly related to funding: on one side, governmental spending has decreased compared to the generous late Mubarak regime and, on the other, international donors have often been treated suspiciously as potential agents of foreign influence by the new Egyptian authorities and have often been subject to restriction (Hemeida, 2012; Tohami Abdelhay, 2010: 24-27). However, the intensity of organization and coordination between different youth structures is high.

In terms of non-governmental actors in Lebanon, the exclusive reference in state documents and decisions is the Youth Forum, which was established in 2009 to include two large groups of entities: civil society organizations and youth sections of political parties. Recently the Forum is generally regarded to be closer to youth sections of political parties and their wish to use it as an additional instrument in their power struggles rather than as a separate youth arena. The fall in the number of youth NGOs actually participating in the Forum's activities is indicative in this direction (Harb, 2016: 9).

Another attempt at gathering youth activists from different spheres (from schools to NGOs) into a single structure was the launch of the National Youth Parliament in 2009 under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. Two years later, it was assessed as having practically failed.

There are many youth-led and youth-oriented associations in Lebanon. According to surveys, they constitute nearly 40% of all the 6,000 NGOs operating in the country. Experts point out that the majority of them bears strong affiliation to the existing confessions even when they promote secular-type activities. Besides, they seem to be highly influenced by both political parties and international donors and not many of them enjoy the capacity to act independently (Rossis, 2014: 11-12; Rarrbo, 2010b: 16-17).

5.4. Financial resources

When speaking about funding of youth policies, the countries under consideration share similar budgetary principles. The principal budgetary agent is the ministry of youth and sports, which further distributes financial resources to other units and programmes. Nevertheless, we often cannot distinguish between sums allocated to youth and those earmarked for sports. Available information suggests that sports have pride of place in receiving state subsidies anyway.

The 2016 Moroccan state budget allocates 651 million MAD to the Ministry of Youth and Sports as well as 43.8 million to specially subsidized youth activities (Morocco budget, 2016).

The budget allocation for youth policies in Tunisia is unclear. A 2010 study cites the share of 1.5% of the state budget as being intended for youth, culture and leisure (Floris, 2010a: 8). The 2016 state budget allocates 669 million TND to the Ministry of Youth and Sports,

which is 13% more than the 2015 sum (Bellamine, 2015) and corresponds to about 270 million EUR.

A gradual decrease in resources marks the Algerian budgetary policy towards youth (Algeria factsheet, 2014). The newest 2016 budget fixes the sum at 37.2 billion DZD (equivalent to 301.8 million EUR). All of this should be perceived in the general context of cuts in public expenditure (9% in 2016) (Algeria budget, 2016).

According to the state budget for the 2013-14 fiscal year in Egypt (under the new Constitution, the fiscal year starts every July 1 and ends at the end of June of the following calendar year), which is the latest that can be found on the website of the Egyptian Ministry of Finance. Money allocated to the areas of youth, culture and religious affairs amounted to 23.815 billion EGP (around 2.43 billion EUR) (Egypt budget, 2013-14), or some 3% of the total.

There is no clear information on Lebanese national budgeting for youth policies. The Ministry of Finance site does not provide such numbers. Studies cite the not very reliable share of 1% of the national budget allocated to public education (Harb, 2016: 4). According to the 2012 World Bank data, this share is actually 2.2%. A specific feature of Lebanese policies is that many state provisions are channelled through representative bodies of officially recognized ethno-religious communities (Nassif and Amara, 2015).

6. Stakeholders' perceptions and social representations

The basis for analysis in this paragraph is twenty-nine focus groups – between four and nine in each of the five countries. The analyses were conducted by the local teams in different locations in each country: in the capital, in urban and rural areas and with different groups of stakeholders (SAHWA. Dataset from the fieldwork, 2015). The discussions were audio recorded, transcribed and extensive summaries were presented in English. We used NVivo 10 to extract the terms most frequently used in each group and then combined all texts in each country to explore the dominant visions of youth problems and policy solutions in the national debates (See Appendix).

Most focus groups were comprised of adult stakeholders: state and local policy makers, managers of financial institutions and not-for-profit organizations, youth practitioners and teachers. There were also focus groups with young people: students, young entrepreneurs, unemployed youth and young people active in the informal economy (MA_FG_4).

6.1 Dominant image of youth and youth policy challenges

As seen from the analysis of the terms in the Moroccan focus group texts (see Figure 1 in the Appendix), 'youth' and 'young people' are at the centre of the discussion. Terms that are closely related to youth are 'entrepreneurs' and 'entrepreneurship'. This seems to be the desired strategy of state policy makers, NGO activists and private executive officials as well as of many of the young participants. We can also distinguish a focus on 'change' and

‘political events’. Among the institutions, leading positions are given to school, work and economy. The term ‘underground’ appears as a significant aspect of the economy or rather young people’s involvement in the economy.

The word cloud from the debates in Tunisia (see Figure 2 in the Appendix) presents a picture in which the term ‘young people’ strongly dominates, while the term ‘youth’, unlike in Morocco, is awarded much less attention. This indicates a perception of youth not as a homogeneous group or generation but rather consisting of different sub-groups. There is a very strong emphasis on education and school as a youth policy institution. Family and work also have significant presence in the discussion on the lives of young people in the country. The words ‘political’ and ‘revolution’ are used but with much less frequency than in Morocco, which suggests that these issues are no longer at the forefront of youth concerns. The visible presence of the term ‘without’ implies a growing concentration on problems and trends toward social exclusion.

In the word cloud for stakeholders’ discussions in Algeria (see Figure 3 in the Appendix) the vision of youth as a heterogeneous, multi-faceted assemblage is also as dominant as in Tunisia. In the same way, school (and education and training) stands out as the main institution, whereas family (and parents) and work (and employment) emerge as very important in young people’s lives. The word ‘children’ is often used in association with youth, implying a more paternalistic perception of youth, and the frequency of the terms ‘problem’ and ‘lack’ suggest an attitude to youth as having problems rather than a resource for society. The attention to ‘values’ and ‘culture’, with stronger frequency than in Morocco and Tunisia, is greater than that awarded to ‘politics’ and ‘change’. Words related to state youth policy such as ‘government’, ‘administration’ and ‘programmes’ are the least-often referred to in the debates on youth issues in the country.

In the stakeholders’ discussions in Egypt (see Figure 4 in the Appendix) the perception of youth as a heterogeneous group is also dominant, as seen from the prominent ‘first place’ taken by participants instead of youth or young people, who are shifted to the edges of the cloud. Differently from the previous word clouds, in the Egyptian focus groups ‘work’ and ‘education’ are awarded the same frequency, while ‘family’ earns much less attention. Interestingly enough, ‘jobs’ and ‘market’ are closely related and with similarly high attention to ‘work’ and ‘education’. The terms ‘public’ and ‘politics’ figure more prominently than in the other countries, as do ‘engagement’ and ‘participation’, although not as much as ‘work’ and ‘education’. Another divergence from the previous clouds is that the words ‘family’ and ‘parents’ have a much lower frequency of use, similar to those of ‘government’ and ‘business’.

Similarly to Egypt, in the Lebanese focus groups (see Figure 5 in the Appendix) the words ‘youth’ and ‘young people’ are missing from the most often-used terms. It is ‘school’, ‘university’ and ‘education’ that have the strongest prominence among other terms, and perhaps more than in the other countries. A significant link is created between the domain of education and languages, which are mentioned in singular and plural, as well as separate languages mentioned such as Arabic, French and English. Work is awarded much less significance and, unlike for other countries, family is missing from the debates. Judging from the attention paid to ‘male’ and ‘female’, there is a high awareness among Lebanese stakeholders of gender equality issues.

6.2 Social representations of the present-day young generation

In terms of perception of youth, the Moroccan discussions reveal an understanding that it is not only age that defines what youth is. However, when other substantive criteria are added, such as having a job or forming a family or leaving the parental home, the picture gets blurred. For policy makers and practitioners, in implementing youth programmes and initiatives it is easier to stick to a clear age limit. As a result, the policy portrayal of youth is of a homogeneous group. This perception of youth hides the social inequalities within the group – in terms of class origins, rural-urban divide, gender and achieved educational level.

The official rhetoric that youth is an actor in social change and a producer of value in society contrasts with the more veiled representation of the young as immature and unable to take responsibility for important issues. This stance popped up several times in the focus groups of policy makers and promoters of entrepreneurship. Bank managers in particular considered that today's young people prefer to rely on their families and passively wait for funding for their initiatives.

In Tunisia, social representation of youth discloses mixed negative and positive visions. The dominant discourse was about young people being “dynamic”, “rebellious” and “modern” (TN_FG_1, p. 3). This was easily interpreted in a negative light and a significant part of the discussion focused on young people being “rude”, “aggressive”, “violent” and “obscene” (ibid). Some of the participants spoke about a “trivialization of rudeness” in Tunisian society and linked this process to the new youthful forms of expression, most prominently rap and other ‘new’ music styles easily spread via the new social media. Teachers expressed their constant surprise at young people's language, which differs from that of the adult generations. For their part, young people defined adult language as “too refined, too sweet” (ibid).

We could see the difference. In Morocco, an active stance in life is particularly praised as an expression of a new generational consciousness pushing changes through:

...the most interesting thing we learned in Morocco is to get out from the shell of fear. Here we were always afraid to talk about monarchy. Since 2011, young people may talk, express themselves. This can be seen in social networks, people may criticise, and I believe this is good. (MA_FG_2, p. 6).

In Tunisia, the perception of youth is again of an active group, but this time activity does not have positive features only.

A uniform representation of youth among the stakeholders of youth policy is not to be found in Algeria either. Focus groups consisting of policy makers and youth workers insisted that youth policy should acknowledge that there were different categories among the young. They stated that it was easier to work with educated youth but those who remained uneducated were difficult to communicate with and vulnerable to dangerous influences (DZ_FG_9). Further along in the discussion, adult stakeholders pointed out youth problems such as spread of violence, forming of youth gangs, laziness, inadequate aspirations, which suggest a prevalence of a negative image of young people.

Our young people ... they are assisted. For example the students of our establishment, they are completely taken care of, nevertheless they come late to the courses. They ask

only for their rights, they think only of getting and do not think of their duties: They have in mind give me, give me... They do not work, they do not read. (DZ_FG_9, p. 4)

Besides family and school, the group defined the mosque and the street as the main institutions regulating youth transitions to adulthood in the country. The latter was the social space where youth learnt all the destructive habits.

The family, the school, the mosque do not play their role. There is a single institution which plays its role, at present, it is the street. In the past, we said: what does the child do in the street? Now it is the opposite: what does the street do to the child? It is the bad company, the academic failure, the crime, etc. He learns to smoke the cigarette, then the cannabis, etc. (DZ_FG_9, p. 5)

Active and passive youth roles are extensively discussed in Egypt. Criticism was directed at young people's passivity and waiting attitude, their unwillingness to take up existing opportunities in the labour market which did not match their unrealistic expectations. A teacher criticised that parents did not prepare children for school and did not explain the importance of education in society. Parents were also accused of encouraging young people's preference for public sector jobs. Some of the stakeholders also shared the opinion that:

The private sector is not safe, any CEO can dismiss you at any time, but in the public sector, he cannot fire you even if you are not really working. (EG_FG_2, p. 6)

On their part, the young people in the focus groups demonstrated a more proactive stance. They aspired to getting higher degrees, to getting involved in additional courses and to gaining working experience rather than relying on their parents' connections. Unfair recruitment in the form of 'wasta' was mentioned in all focus groups but still qualifications and young people's agency were seen as the best way to labour market integration.

6.3 Perceptions of the gaps in youth policy

In the discussions, in all countries it was the educational system that was seen as failing young people. It no longer met the expectations of moral cultivation, nor did it provide the skills necessary for successful integration in the labour market.

In Morocco, all groups shared a negative evaluation of the school system. Bank managers and NGO practitioners accused teachers of being 'outside the real world', providing theoretical knowledge. The entrepreneurship group pointed to the fact that the state and private programmes for encouraging private ventures by the young do not work because the young lack managerial skills, skills to present, communicate and defend their business ideas. Young people also agreed that school does not provide "the most important soft skills... communication, leadership, interpersonal relationships, all those you never learn in school." (MA_FG_2, p. 6). They were however much more critical towards the lack of true financial support in the state programme for entrepreneurship.

The administrative part is very easy, but a young entrepreneur cannot access financing. The advertising we can see in newspapers, on TV are lies somehow. When meeting with a banker he asks for previous year balance sheet, guarantees, but we have nothing. (MA_FG_2, p. 6)

Here, we can observe how highly sensitive the problem is in the link between education and employment. In the Tunisian focus groups the vision of school was much more positive than in the Moroccan groups. It was perceived as playing a very significant role in the forming of a young person's identity, with a compensatory effect for the problems in the family. Some participants were more critical of school and its inability to prepare young people for 'real life' and most importantly for employment. Young people leave school and even university without a clear idea of what kind of work they should look for, without a definite life plan. Others accused young people of selfishness, of thinking only of emigration, including jihad in Syria, or engaging in smuggling illegal goods (TN_FG_1, p. 7). Among the young there were also negative evaluations of the low competence of teachers and their self-interested behaviour. These mirror accusations of selfishness and demonstrate the lack of understanding and distrust between the young and those who work to implement state policy.

Part of these assessments is shared by Algerian stakeholders, together with some additional ones: low motivation of teachers and poverty of many households who cannot afford to educate children and make them work for pay. State policy makers were directly to blame when carrying out reforms to restructure the educational system without argumentation and consideration for the consequences (DZ_FG_7). Unemployment is another youth problem commented upon and one which has grave consequences for young people's life trajectories. Even those with diplomas from vocational schools and universities cannot find jobs. After leaving the educational institution, in the words of one participant, the unemployed person "*finds himself lost between sky and earth*" (DZ_FG_2, p. 2). Many considered that youth unemployment is not due to low economic growth but a lack of state support for local businesses and declared themselves against the practices of hiring foreign workers in the country.

Education is acknowledged to be a higher-priority issue in Egypt although some diverging evaluations do exist. Educational policy was met differently by the stakeholders. State investments in education are high and rising but they do not keep up with population growth and there are continuing inequalities between rural and urban areas. Unlike in Morocco, the focus group participants in Egypt were not entirely negative about the quality of education in the country. They do have criticisms but they were more nuanced and not merely focused on teachers' inability to respond to market needs. In the focus group of policy makers and NGO activists they underlined that 'a Bachelor's degree is important to get a job' (EG_FG_2, p. 2). In addition, education was seen as a way to earn prestige in society, including improving the young person's prospects for marriage. As a young man put it, "In order to have status in society, you need to have a certificate or a Masters certificate or a diploma" (EG_FG_4, p. 4).

In Lebanon, similarly to the other Arab countries but with even greater intensity, the educational system was accused of providing outdated information with books which are "at least 20 years behind those in France" (LB_FG_1, p. 3). What was specific for the discourse in the Lebanese focus groups was that it put the spotlight on the difference between state and

private schools and universities, with public ones being more ‘rigid’, allowing aggressive behaviour among students and offering less quality. There were accusations against teachers for their lack of respect for young people, demonstrations of authority and often overt discrimination on religious grounds and party affiliations. Many young participants expressed the opinion that the private schools had turned into profit-making institutions, increasing social inequality in the country.

Some participants directed their criticism towards the government and the ruling parties. The theme of political patronage and unjust practices of ‘wasta’ in getting a job was raised, as in many of the other countries in the study.

In the context of youth issues, the political establishment is generally viewed positively in Morocco. Stakeholders claim that there is greater policy attention on youth after the 2011 events.

-...we didn't talk about youth as much before 2011. The ministry of youth and sports didn't have sufficient budget, besides, we didn't hear much from this ministry before 2011. After 2011, the international NGOs and other actors give youth more attention. The youth themselves have gained more confidence, are much more open and aware of their rights...

- [W]hat happened in recent years in the Arab world and Morocco has at least changed the vision of the actors in relation to youth. These actors are now taking into account the opinion of youth [...] but not yet in terms of important enrolment of these young people in political action.

-... I think that there has been this impact: this awareness of identity, of belonging to a social group and therefore from there, things can be claimed now, the youth can claim a place in society, to participate in the policies that concern them, it can also take place in the institutions, in political parties. MA_FG_3, p. 4.

However, limited effects and complex regulatory and administrative procedures lead to scepticism.

The narratives of the focus groups in Tunisia concerning politics were more pessimistic than those in other countries, expressing disappointment with the unfilled promises of the political elite:

The entire system is corrupt! What is there to say? ... They talk too much, every month we are told ... We'll do this, we'll do that! We are fed up! Speeches are everywhere!! On television ... everywhere, we are tired! (TN_FG_3, p. 4)

Young people discussed illegal migration, the temptation of Jihad, fraud among politicians, which is evidence of the freedom of speech gained with the Revolution. This however cannot compensate for the limited opportunities for young people in their transition to adulthood. In the words of one young man, *“It looks like we live in a desert, where we follow a path the end of which is unknown.”* (TN_FG_2, p. 5). The wandering in the desert seems to have replaced the “right path” in the eyes of the unemployed youth.

In Algeria, the overarching explanation of the low efficiency of state policies in the stakeholders' discourse was the ‘communication problem’ (DZ_FG_9, p. 2). The participants spoke about the lack of dialogue between the policy makers and young people.

They also underlined the spread of the practice in which administration officers did not listen to the young person and treated them poorly. More importantly, one member of the group admitted that the programmes were designed without consulting the young. As a result, the authorities did not know the needs and aspirations of the young. One young man expressed his disappointment that their protests did not make any difference: *They do not take our views, they do not give any importance to our views. When we talk to them they say: we will see...* (DZ_FG_2, p. 4). Participants in most focus groups pointed to the practices of nepotism and paying bribes at all levels – from school to the labour market and this practice is spreading in the access to youth policy programmes.

In some cases, migration is perceived as a way of finding a more favourable context for developing your professional skills, gaining valuable new skills and qualifications, a form of experiential learning. In Egypt:

Abroad, you have the opportunity to work in many fields, you find people who appreciate your work. If someone attended a course abroad and returned, they would get a better job than someone who did courses in the country. (EG_FG_4, p. 8).

The Lebanese situation is even darker. Young people's strategies in response to the problems were to lower their expectations and pursue available opportunities even when different from their specialities or to go abroad to search for better work and life than those offered in their home country.

In the five AMCs one can see a shared perception of what constitutes the main problems facing today's youth. Differences emerge as to the interpretation of the origins of the problems and the ways of working to find solutions for them.

6.4 Representations of the Arab family as the main source of support for youth

If state policy is perceived as ineffective and civil society is little involved in youth policy, then it is the family which remains the most important source of support for young people. The family not only supplies shelter, money, protection and help for offspring. The focus group participants in all countries attributed to the family a very significant role in transmitting Islamic values and local traditions or, as one participant in Algeria (DZ_FG_3, p. 11) put it, the extended family *'makes a strong connection with future generations, the present generation and history and the past.'* Young people often underlined that the family provides "principles and values" (TN_FG_4, p. 2); "teaches you what to do and what to avoid" and "to be on the right path" (TN_FG_3, p. 2).

There was a shared feeling that social change was affecting the family, reducing its resources to enhance moral standards and parental control. In one group the value shifts were perceived as a cultural reversal towards greater religiosity in the young generation compared to the parental one. In the words of one young man:

It is mainly your grandparents who talk to you of religion, grandfather or grandmother, not the parents! I remember that it's my grandmother, God rest her soul, who always

spoke of religion. You have to respect others! You have to do this and avoid that! ... ". (TN_FG_2, p. 3)

In some discussions, the family was accused of creating barriers to the successful integration of young people in the new economy. In Morocco, the parental generation was perceived as lagging behind the economic changes and being unable to accept young people's aspiration to start their own businesses.

...I had to be out, to travel, to be in touch with different people, students and my parents needed a very long time to accept it and to agree to the fact that I wanted to be an entrepreneur.

...My sister resigned from her job to work on her own, and she had to confront my parents. But quitting a salary-based job is unthinkable, it is considered financial suicide. (MA_FG_2, p. 12).

The family was also described as the institution which imposed traditional gender norms. In Arab families, young men have more freedom to go out and are entitled to spend money for leisure. Young women, on the contrary, are expected to stay at home and study. The Algerian focus group participants, both adult and young, shared the view that gender relations should be based on the recognition of women's "weakness", a view that was widespread among participants. The very composition of the focus groups, where most participants were men, also attests to the wide acceptance of gender inequality. A young man in the fourth group declared himself against the changes in the Family Code which allowed the woman to marry without her guardian's permission. Several of the groups voiced opinions that women were privileged in the job market, with employers preferring to hire women and thus undermining men's job prospects. Most shared the view that a woman's place was in the home and that it was acceptable for women to work in some areas such as care or the local administration but not as the head of the municipal council (DZ_FG_6, p. 7).

The discussions revealed a lot about the adherence to traditional values among young people. Many participants, particularly those in rural areas, saw in a negative light the role of mass media in spreading Western music and movies, defining them as 'seduction techniques' (DZ_FG_4, p. 8) and 'cultural invasion' (DZ_FG_6, p. 8). Such practices, including the new dress styles, were breaking up local traditions, undermining moral principles and deterring people from following the Quran.

In Egypt, the focus groups also touched upon the issue of gender inequality in employment. While there were no limitations to the young women's access to education which had existed in the past, there were many cultural barriers to women's employment and mobility. In the adult stakeholders' group (EG_FG_2, p. 3) the married men among the participants said that they did not allow their wives to work and would not do it even if their fathers wished it. One woman who now had her own business in childcare explained that in the beginning neither her parents nor her friends encouraged or supported her financial independence.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

The recent upheavals in AMCs have resulted in greater policy attention to young people even in countries where there were no mass youth protests in 2011-12 or where their protests did not generate a substantial transformative effect. Youth issues started to be recognized as a significant element of the overall state policies, resulting in normative and institutional restructuring. The analysis so far gives grounds for pointing to some common features of youth policy formation in the region.

- Youth policy in AMCs starts with a narrow definition of youth which excludes children. At the same time it tends to shift the upper age limit further up to include young adults – an approach similar to the youth policy model of Southern European states.
- With some qualifications, the dominant understanding of youth is as a problem – both as a problem for society and as a problem to themselves, with the former taking precedence. Youth policies imply protectiveness, which resembles the conservative model of continental Europe and is in contrast with the universalistic model.
- The main problems of youth are defined as low-quality education, its mismatch with market needs, mass unemployment and high involvement in the informal economy. Emigration is also highlighted as an issue but not in the Eastern European post-communist manner of a ‘brain drain’ discourse.
- Centralized policy making (youth ministries in all countries) and low community involvement (civic structures based predominantly on foreign funding and looked upon with suspicion) characterize AMCs and provide references to the Southern European and post-communist models.
- Youth policy objectives actually relate to the prevention of social problems and the integration of youth into the political system, with very limited encouragement of independent youth participation. Similarly to Eastern European countries, the AMCs share a historical heritage of authoritarian governmental control and low trust in young people’s abilities to take responsibility for their choices.
- Unlike all European models, youth policy targeting does not address in earnest the social and regional inequalities among youth and reproduce unequal access to services.
- State youth policy appears to be gender blind. The region is well known for having the lowest female employment rate and the rights of young women are not addressed by youth policy.
- It is not the state or the market but the family that remains the most widely trusted institution by the young and a refuge for mitigating the consequences of housing scarcity, unemployment, financial hardship and social insecurity. Religious institutions come second in importance in this regard.

Focusing on the commonalities attesting to a specific AMC model of youth policy should not lead us to neglect the challenge of diversity – in both historical and institutional

traditions and stakeholders' ways of thinking and prioritizing. The 'Arab Spring' revolutions no doubt constitute a turning point in all countries although the changes brought about by them have not always been "revolutionary". Youth policy perception started to widen to cover new areas and forms of intervention; youth involvement is praised but insufficiently encouraged; and the priority of youth issues is declared but still remains in the shadow of education, employment and emigration concerns. In conclusion, we do not have enough evidence to speak of a specific AMC youth policy model. Rather, there are commonalities with different existing models, most particularly with the Southern and Eastern European ones. If there is a possibility for a model, it is still a model *in statu nascendi*.

Our analysis also allows us to conclude that AMC youth policies are still unable to meet young people's needs and aspirations and have not designed a comprehensive strategy for social development to the benefit of young people. What we can do at the end of our report is to present some suggestions for a youth policy based on a new social contract. This should include:

- A shift from a problem-focused policy to a resource-focused one, which would firstly involve overcoming traditional distrust of youth, their abilities and responsibility in improving their societies.
- Implementing reforms which build on the actual experience and visions of young people, on what they have created, met and wished rather than following pre-designed schemes.
- Not just promoting youth participation through existing state structures but also supporting young people's self-organization in a healthy plethora of independent clubs, committees and councils and voluntary work opportunities.
- Developing an evidence base of practical experiential knowledge of all those who work with young people: teachers, social workers, practitioners from local and international bodies.
- Promoting youth work through training, qualifications and an independent organizational framework.
- Addressing gaps in youth policy provision and developing measures against corruption and social inequalities and for job creation and provision of youth housing and childcare services.

Endnotes

1. We would like to acknowledge the dedicated fieldwork and in-depth country analysis done by the teams in Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt and Lebanon.
2. Here and further on all information about the Ministry's structure, functions and activities is extracted from: Le cite de la Ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports,
<http://www.mjs.gov.ma/fr>
3. Ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports Tunisien, <http://jeunesse-sport.tn/fr/ministere/presentation>
4. Here and further all the information about the structure, functions and activities of the Ministry is extracted from: Le cite de la Ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports:
<http://www.mjs.gov.dz/>
5. From the site of the Ministry: <http://www.emss.gov.eg/>
6. The official site of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, section on the unit's administrative structure (in Arabic): <http://www.minijes.gov.lb/Cultures/ar-LB/Programs/law/Pages/Law926.aspx>
7. The site tanmia.ma is perhaps the leading step in this direction since it contains a large database of civic structures divided by sectors.

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Appendix. Word Clouds of Stakeholders' Discussions

Figure 1. Moroccan focus groups



Figure 2. Tunisian focus groups



Figure 3. Algerian focus groups



Figure 4. Egyptian focus groups



Figure 5. Lebanese focus groups





Researching
Arab Mediterranean Youth:
Towards a New Social Contract



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