YOUTH ACTIVISM IN THE SOUTH AND EAST MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES SINCE THE ARAB UPRISINGS: CHALLENGES AND POLICY OPTIONS

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Youth Activism in the South and East Mediterranean Countries since the Arab Uprisings: Challenges and Policy Options

1. Youth Activism, Government Policies and the Role of the EU[**]

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The Arab upheavals in 2010-2011 that took place in several countries in the South and East Mediterranean (SEM) were largely depicted as expressions of youth-led activism after many years of relative calm. The rapid and unexpected mass mobilisations of 2010-2011, anticipated by the development over the last decade of youth-based activist groups and by the spread of new communication technologies, has been described as the coming on the scene of a new generation united by the shared experience of the economic, political and social failures of post-independence regimes and by new ways to protest and act. These events brought Arab youth dramatically into the limelight, by renewing the world's attention towards the status and conditions of young generations in the region. In fact, most analyses of the uprisings have identified the region's exceptionally high rates of youth unemployment, exacerbated by a dramatic demographic bulge, and in general their unsustainable exclusion from political, social and economic opportunities as the main causes of diffuse discontent and anger. Talks about "marginalisation" and "disenfranchisement" have catalysed much attention (Lynch, 2011; Roberts, 2013). In many countries in the SEM region, youth became the keyword to understand both the root causes and the dynamics of the revolution as well as the priorities of the post-revolutionary political transitions. As such, young people have been identified as a potential engine for long-needed change in the region. However, the framing of the Arab uprisings in the SEM countries as being youth-led rebellions has had the effect of isolating the agency of youth from the larger society and broader structural constraints. For instance, the emphasis on the youth as "revolutionary actors" largely underestimates the central role played by adults and by adult-led organisations protesting over issues that concern not only young people but the whole of society. Youth groups and organisations have certainly played a pivotal role in recent mobilisations, but they are part of a broader spectrum of organisations, such as trade unions, peasant movements, political parties, faith-based movements, and so on, which should also be taken into account when assessing the prospects for "youth empowerment" and the improvement of the population's general conditions.

Five years have passed since those momentous events and a number of questions still remain to understand the phenomenon of youth activism in the SEM countries. All of this enthusiasm for youth since 2011 brought further multiplication of youth-targeting programmes and initiatives, mainly carried out through international cooperation organisations and NGOs. Starting from the early 2000s, youth has become a key development priority for organisations such as the World Bank, the United Nations and the International Labour Organization (ILO). The global political discourse is increasingly filled with references and/or concerns about "youth unemployment", "youth bulge", but also with empathy towards "youth dynamism" or calling for "youth empowerment". This

trend has arguably been on the rise since the Arab uprisings. Turning to the academic and scholarly debate, most studies have focused on youth exclusion/inclusion at the political level by shedding light on the existing constraints and opportunities for political consciousness and participation as well as civil society engagement, whose absence has often led to alienation and even radicalisation (Dhillon & Yousef, 2009; Bayat, 2010; Beinin & Vairel, 2011). What is lacking in the debates around youth issues is a sound analysis of the claims, goals, forms, strategies and prospects of youth activism around socioeconomic issues, which cannot be separated from the political goals espoused by youth. All in all, the relevance of this topic is heightened by the fact that most frameworks of analysis have constructed the youth as a "problem" and a "threat" to national and regional political stability, by drawing a gloomy outlook as a result of the demographic bulge and high youth unemployment rates in the SEM countries.

This Policy Study is meant to fill this gap by dwelling on a topic that – in addition to its academic relevance – has clear policy implications, particularly at a time in which the European Union (EU) is revising its policies and cooperation instruments towards the ever-changing SEM region. This contribution is meant to provide the framework for analysis that will guide the research presented in the other chapters that make up the Policy Study. The rest of the introductory chapter is structured in three sections: the first one discusses the impact of the SEM region governments' policies on youth exclusion/inclusion prior to and after the outbreak of the Arab uprisings. Some questions that are addressed include: has 2011 and the Arab uprisings represented a turning point in the discourses and experiences associated with youth exclusion/inclusion? Have specific youth policies emerged since 2011, either regarding labour markets or political participation? This section also critically engages with the concepts of "youth exclusion" and "youth inclusion" by highlighting the extent to which they are social and relational constructs. The second section frames youth activism in the SEM countries by assessing some of the goals, modes of action and repertoires used by youth in their mobilisation. The chapter then briefly reviews the EU's youth-relevant approach and policies to highlight some of the shortcomings associated with them. Finally, it offers some conclusions.

1.1 The Impact of Government Policies on Youth Exclusion/Inclusion

Dealing with the youth in the SEM region entails recognising, first of all, that this is a diversified category. Young people across different social, cultural, class, gender and ethnic strata have expressed different socioeconomic needs and demands and have

tended to act differently. The expressions, ideas and experiences of being young tend to vary across cultural, class, gender, ethnicity and other divides (Herrera & Bayat, 2010, p. 7). The experiences of the individual SEM countries also tend to differ to a great extent as far as the governments' policies and the type and scope of external support are concerned. In other words, individual or group experiences of what it means to be young are influenced by social constructs that are time and space specific (Herrera & Bayat, 2010, p. 6). For example, Tunisia and Morocco have had access to a comparatively greater number of youth-related initiatives implemented by a host of institutions, including the European ones, thus giving even more salience to the claims and goals of the youth in these countries as well as their active manifestations in the socioeconomic domain.[1] In contrast, youths in other SEM countries still remain marginal actors in terms of their ability to promote change.

Although there is no internationally agreed definition of youth, its conceptualisation has been based primarily on age groupings (normally defined as the 15-29 year old group). An age-based definition is commonly used for statistical and instrumental purposes as it makes it possible to group young people together for comparison temporally and geographically. Alternatively, youth has been defined as the "period of transition into adulthood", emphasising adulthood as the final destination on this path (Dhillon et al., 2009). In this regard, three aspects stand out as crucial and interdependent in making this transition: namely, education, employment and family formation. In light of the challenges and obstacles faced by young people in these three domains, it is possible to speak of a "stalled" transition. Dhillon and Yousef (2009) describe young people as being in a state of *waiting* as they struggle to earn enough and appropriate educational skills to find meaningful jobs and thus be able to earn an income to progress to the next stage of independence and family formation. This leads to an understanding of youth as being less defined by age, on an individual basis, than by a sense of exclusion, marginalisation and alienation, and by collective experiences of failed state policy in the post-independence era. According to some authors, this fosters the creation of a peculiar "youth narrative", namely a lived and shared experience that combines public and private aspects of life and is shaped by the failures of (authoritarian) regimes on a number of fronts (Murphy, 2012). As such, youth is a dynamic social construction endowed with permeable and fluid boundaries as well as overlapping identities. This categorisation is indeed inclusive as it goes beyond the age boundaries set by stricter definitions of youth, but rather encompasses all those individuals – of different ages and ideological and socioeconomic backgrounds – who have been marginalised by the failed policies enacted by post-independence Arab states. In many countries in the region, youth as a narrative has become the uniting factor and engine behind a number of diverse actors,

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1 This comparison is based on official EU documents: namely, the EU-Morocco Action Plan (2013-2017) and the EU-Tunisia Action Plan (2013-2017).

including adults, who have stood up against the exclusionary practices of authoritarian Arab regimes. These actors have been knit together into a generational unit by shared ideals of freedom and justice, which ultimately triggered the Arab uprisings.

Social exclusion is normally defined as a process in which individuals or groups of individuals are progressively and systematically blocked from rights, opportunities and resources (e.g., education, housing, employment, healthcare, civic engagement, democratic participation), preventing them from full participation in the society in which they live, thus implying a break in the social bonds that tie the excluded individual or group to the larger society (Silver, 2007). Applied to youth, exclusion describes a process by which young people are deprived of opportunities for obtaining education, acquiring skills and participating fully in all aspects of society (United Nations, 2007). The concept of social exclusion emphasises causality, social interactions and unequal power relations. Exclusion, as a process, is the product of exclusionary power relationships. Exclusion by definition implies excluders and exclusionary institutions and policies. Laws, policies or programmes as well as a predominant set of values, beliefs and institutions may operate systematically to the benefit of certain powerful groups at the expense of others (Kabeer, 2000). As far as youth exclusion is concerned, the excluders are often considered to be the older generations.

Inasmuch as youth is a socially constructed category, the dimensions and processes of youth exclusion also vary across and within countries/regions, across the rural/urban divide and reflecting each space's specific histories, demography, institutional assets, social structures, policies, cultural and social norms, and other characteristics. At the macro level, beyond common trends in the SEM region, we can find important differences between countries as far as youth exclusion is concerned, depending on features, such as the productive structure, the integration into the global economy, the educational attainment of the youth population as well as levels of conflict and peace (Dhillon & Yousef, 2009). Unfortunately, broad comparative studies on youth exclusion for the SEM region are almost absent, given the paucity of comparable data and the heterogeneity of analytical and methodological approaches. Taking a broad, regional perspective, up until the Arab uprisings, a very low number of eligible young people voted in national and local elections, despite important country-specific differences. Even after the uprisings, surveys have pointed to the fact that young people in the SEM region identify less and less with formal political and social institutions, do not feel politically represented and are increasingly disenchanted with the state's capacity to provide for their well-being, especially if compared with the older generation that experienced the early benefits of welfarism (Khouri & Shehata, 2011; Murphy, 2012).

To examine the governments' policies towards youth in the SEM region, the point of departure must be an examination of the way in which "youth" is defined in public discourses and narratives. In most SEM countries, the category of youth has always been double-sided, encompassing both positive and negative connotations. On the one hand, youth has often been portrayed as a source for change, dynamism and modernity, while, on the other, youth is also associated with potential threats to public order and factors of instability in light of the existing political and socioeconomic grievances, such as unemployment and lack of participation. More specifically, it is possible to appreciate the extent to which the prevailing paradigms treat youths as either a "trouble" or a "victim". As much as these might sound markedly different from one another, at closer inspection they turn out to be two sides of the same coin. On the one hand, youth are seen as having dangerously derailed from traditional values and social and religious responsibility. On the other, the expression of youth dissatisfaction is said to have to be contained under the pretext of protecting young, immature people from themselves. It follows from this that for Arab governments, as well as for international institutions including the EU, youth as a social category has become an arena for public policy. It can be argued that this conceptualisation of youth has pre-dated the Arab uprisings, meaning that most governments in the SEM region have struggled for some time "to bring their youthful populations inside the fence of formal – and restrictive – political structures" (Murphy, 2012, p. 6).

Concerning the analysis of state policies, the first point to make is that they are never youth-neutral. In addition to policies and legislation that explicitly target youth, other policies, such as conventional economic policies, welfare policies, migration or spatial planning policies, may have a more indirect but still strong impact on young people and their sense of exclusion/inclusion even if they appear to have very little to do with them. Furthermore, state policies and institutional structures do not impact equally on youth from different social and cultural backgrounds (e.g., rural or urban youth, youth from poor and marginalised areas, ethnic or confessional minorities, young women and men, etc.), thus contributing to producing different territorial, ethnic and gender effects among them. For example, in Tunisia, where the level of social spending remained relatively high under Ben Ali, it was biased against the poorest regions, thus rendering socioeconomic conditions for the youth living in these areas particularly unbearable (Hibou et al., 2011; Ben Romdhane, 2011). State policies and institutions are the product not only of domestic factors, but also of powerful external actors' pressures and influences, inasmuch as they directly influence the formulation of national policies or the creation/shaping of national institutions. For instance, the labour market problems faced by youth in the SEM are related to the local implementation of the internationally-

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sponsored economic liberalisation policies pursued in the last two decades, which completely failed to create sufficient and decent employment opportunities for the growing number of young university graduates in most SEM countries.

Two cases, namely Morocco and Tunisia, are briefly addressed here. Regarding Morocco, since the accession to the throne of King Mohammed VI in 1999, increased attention has been paid to security risks deriving from rising social tensions, including the so-called "social question", the "youth question" and the "women question" (Catusse, 2009).[2] As a reaction to these perceived threats to public order and consensus, the new king actively re-oriented the monarchy's discourse and action towards participative development and pluralism, including specific measures aimed at fighting poverty and providing social protection to the vulnerable population under the umbrella of the much-publicised National Human Development Initiative (*Initiative nationale pour le développement humain,* INDH). Some of these measures were specifically targeted at young people and their active participation in civic and political life. For example, the voting age was lowered to eighteen and in 2002 an amendment to the law of associations was introduced apparently with the objective of allowing more space for the creation of youth organisations (Paciello, Pepicelli & Pioppi, 2016a). Overall, however, the measures enacted in the first decade of the new millennium did not succeed in redressing the prevailing labour insecurity and precariousness as well as the socioeconomic and political inequalities besetting Moroccan youth. Thus, unsurprisingly the Arab uprisings that started in 2011 saw a revamp of the category of youth in public discourse. On the one hand, the 20 February Movement was unanimously referred to as a "youth movement". This, however, contributed to diluting the universal character of the demonstrations and claims and to concealing broader structural social conflicts. On the other, concrete actions were taken by the authorities to foster youth participation in the social, cultural and political life of the country, as well as in its socioeconomic development. Such measures ranged from the creation of a Consultative Council on Youth and Associative Action (*Conseil consultatif de la jeunesse et de l'action associative*) to the revamp of the idea to develop a national unified strategy towards youth.[3] In this regard, the biggest accomplishment has been the approval of the *Statégie Nationale Intégrée de Jeunesse* in 2014. Consistently with the participatory approach promoted by the Moroccan monarchy, its development took place through a bottom-up process involving the consultation of a great number of young people and youth-based organisations (Paciello, Pepicelli & Pioppi, 2016). The content of this strategy clearly indicates that public discourse and action towards youth in Morocco continues to be firmly rooted in the neo-liberal framework, of which the monarchy portrays itself to be a champion. For example, there is little appreciation

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2 It is not a case that the reform of the *Mudawwana,* the family code, took place between 2003 and 2004.

3 It has to be noted that, despite the announcement of its creation in the revised Moroccan Constitution adopted in 2011, the Youth Council has not been established yet.

of the fact that high levels of unemployment among the youth cannot be solely justified by the mismatch between the labour market and the education system, despite the enormous amount of financial resources that have been poured into education-related programmes in the country over the years.[4] Indeed, this view tends to conceal broader structural explanations and alternative visions challenging the prevailing neo-liberal model of development.

Turning to Tunisia, in the attempt to neutralise dissent, then President Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali, in power until January 2011, restricted and co-opted political mobilisation in state-sponsored organisations such as, for youth, the *Union générale des étudiants de Tunisie.* In the context of a single party system and state corporatism, the social pact based on the state's commitment to full employment for the educated youth was instrumental to limit social conflicts and youth political dissent: in exchange for regime loyalty, young people were provided with education, employment opportunities and social mobility. In addition, to mitigate the social costs (and potential political conflicts) of rising inequalities, a number of new social programmes were launched in the 1990s and 2000s, mainly as poverty-alleviating measures with the identification of special social categories in need of intervention (such as poor women and youths living in deprived regions). The growing stress on the need to increase youth education and skills and on youth self-entrepreneurship also had the advantage of placing the burden of youth labour market insertion on young people themselves, rather than on the state. At the same time, always in line with the state's growing disengagement from its post-independence social and economic regulatory functions, the regime adopted a tolerant attitude towards informal economic activities and illegal migration (at least until the early/mid-2000s), which were playing a key labour absorbing function vis-à-vis the youth, particularly in poor urban areas and marginalised regions of the south-west and the centre west (Hibou et al., 2011). While public authorities were seriously concerned with growing youth unemployment, they tried to minimise the problem in an attempt to sustain the official rhetoric of the Tunisian economic miracle at the heart of the regime's stability (Hibou, 2006). Taken on the backdrop of the state neo-liberal macroeconomic policies, the proliferation of youth employment and social programmes carried out since the 1990s were at best mitigating or propaganda moves, or, as argued by Hibou et al. (2011), "dilatory policies" aimed at diminishing the number of unemployed youths in official statistics by registering youths for underpaid internships and programmes. In addition, these measures had the advantage of providing new modalities of control over the unsupervised young population, which was increasingly less attracted to join the youth section of the regime party.

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4 Education arguably represents the Achilles' heel of the country's development process and as such it has been tackled through repeated, ad-hoc plans and policies, most recently in the framework of the National Education Emergency Support Programme 2009-2012. However, most of these plans have been emergency-driven and have lacked coordination with other government policies (Colombo, 2011). Taking a regional view, education in most SEM countries fails to foster critical thinking among the young generations, largely due to a paternalistic attitude by the authorities who are responsible for educational curricula and activities.

Following the Arab uprisings, the concern around marginalised youths as fertile ground for extremism and violence gained momentum. This time, the negative construction of youth is applied to those young Tunisian volunteers to the Islamic State and those who support local terrorist groups (such as the ones who attacked the Bardo Museum in Tunis on 18 March 2015), and more broadly to the continuing mobilisation of unemployed youths in the marginalised regions. Furthermore, the category of "youth as a problem" has been extended to include not only educated unemployed but also young people working under precarious conditions with temporary and seasonal contracts. (Paciello, Pepicielli & Pioppi, 2016b).

1.2 Framing Youth Activism in the South and East Mediterranean Countries

Against this backdrop of constant exclusion and frequent episodes of oppression, the fact that most observers, from within the SEM region and from outside, were caught by surprise by the outbreak of the Arab uprisings in 2010-2011 should sound striking. Indeed, this is directly tied to a tendency to pay too much attention to the arguably stable/stagnatory aspects of Arab politics and its incarnations in state elites, institutions and meaningless political parties (Murphy, 2012). On the contrary, processes of change taking place at the societal level have constantly been downplayed or, worse, disregarded. These changes can be located at the level of the expansion of education opportunities for some of the youth, the increase in people's mobility and connectedness through the booming of new communication technologies, and the demographic composition of Arab populations. Not only have they become massively larger, but they are also significantly younger. For example, in most economic studies, Arab youth are commonly referred to as a demographic bulge, with Arab countries standing out with one of the youngest age profiles in the world. This derives from the combination of declining number of infant mortality with still high fertility rates. This pattern has marked the region during the second half of the twentieth century and seems to be continuing until today.

As already argued, most discourses and policies have constructed youth as a "problem" and a "threat" to national and regional stability, emphasising the daunting consequences of the youth bulge and high youth unemployment in the SEM countries. In this approach, youth are seen as bringing with them specific political and economic challenges for the governments in terms of job creation and social service supply. What is missing – due to the shortcomings of the economic development model in place – is the conceptualisation of the youth bulge as an opportunity for economic growth. Instead,

the SEM region seems to be afflicted by a cohort of dependent, under-utilised and increasingly frustrated and disenfranchised individuals who are treated as a burden on the state. This condition, which has not seen any signs of redress in the wake of the Arab uprisings, has bred a generation (or more) of alienated and frustrated young people. Similarly, excluded from formal political participation, Arab youth have commonly been characterised as apathetic and disengaged from politics or as turning to radical Islam (Assaad & Roudi-Fahimi, 2009). The youth seem individually and collectively frustrated with the lack of national reform and improvement in their situation following the Arab uprisings. The most active youth groups also feel that their contribution to the protests and revolutions has been somehow hijacked by the new ruling political elites, who in most cases overwhelmingly represent the older generations. Young people continue to feel that, contrary to their demands, current legislation often hampers their access to political participation.

Against this backdrop, young people's apathy is often explained by their tendency to wait for resources and opportunities, mainly in terms of public employment, to be handed to them by the governments or by the extended families/communities. This approach tends to neglect the fact that the young generations embody forces for change in a much broader sense, for both themselves and the society at large, and in both the future and the present, as they point to the existence of important grievances that are usually suffered by other strata of the society as well. Similarly, it treats young people "more as objects than agents of social and political reform" (Herrera, 2009, p. 369). As much as there is some truth in this conceptualisation, as the majority of youths in the SEM countries still find themselves with no voice or possibility to express their needs, concerns and aspirations, an increased number of studies and programmes target youth, which is still a minority, and not a passive group waiting for resources and opportunities. This is exemplified by the "Young Arab Voices" programme jointly launched in 2011 by the Anna Lindh Foundation and the British Council.[5]

At the level of modes of action and repertoires, while it is true that young people may reproduce or even reinforce unequal power relations and prevailing, discriminatory social norms, they also tend to forge new ways of thinking about what it means to be an adult, often questioning the values, beliefs and practices of the older generations (Bayat, 2010; Desrues, 2012; Theodoropoulou, 2012). Young people may challenge/react/adapt to their perceived status of exclusion in a number of ways, from individual strategies to organised collective action. As aptly argued by Herrera and Bayat (2010, p. 15), "they may engage in radical politics, withdraw from public life or pursue a minimal life." In this light, a crucial element that facilitates or hinders youth activism has to do with the

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5 For more information, see http://www.annalindhfoundation.org/young-arab-voices

structural conditions, including the institutional setup of the country at the political or the community levels. Young people may express their frustration and rejection of prevailing political systems by joining opposition political movements. Alternatively, much of the youth-based activism observed in recent years has taken place outside of the established formal political parties or civic structures at the national level.[6] Some young people have created new political movements, while others have joined Islamist youth groups linked to leading organisations like Hamas, Hezbollah or the Muslim Brotherhood or other Islamist movements such as the Salafists in Egypt or Tunisia. Others have involved themselves in volunteer work and social entrepreneurship (Khouri & Shehata, 2011). As such, Arab youth activism cannot be confined to a single category of acts as it includes both actions aimed at pursuing structural, long-term changes at the domestic level, in terms of legislation and policies, and at promoting an improvement in individual conditions. All in all, new forms of youth activism have come to the fore, as testified by the erasing of the boundaries between public and private and the interplay between resistance, negotiation, accommodation and compliance. One such strategy is what Bayat (Herrera & Bayat, 2010) calls "subversive accommodation", by which young people operate within and thus use the dominant (constraining) norms and institutions, for instance religious rituals, to accommodate their youthful claims, but in so doing creatively redefine and subvert the constraints of those codes and norms.

Regarding another crucial element to be underscored with regard to the youth's modes of action and repertoires, some authors have spoken of the "Arab street" as one of the preferred locations in which "alternative lifestyles and modes of thought and action falling outside the family and the state are played out" (Murphy, 2012, p. 11). This has become strikingly apparent during the Arab uprisings, in which the streets of the capital and main cities became the spatial home for youth-led social movements and initiatives in which ideological affiliation was secondary or outright irrelevant relative to the sense of belonging of this increasingly marginalised generation. Another feature of the "Arab street" is its increasing embeddedness with global youth-related dynamics. Arab youth are deeply connected to global cultures and identities – often due to experiences or aspirations relating to migration and cross-border mobility, despite retaining their own distinctiveness. It is possible to speak of global networks of youth, sharing both some elements of the aforementioned "youth narrative" as well as specific strategies for activism.

All in all, far from being apathetic and uninterested in politics, as something that bears a strong impact on their own individual socioeconomic development, Arab youth have proved to engage, mobilise and articulate their grievances, demands and aspirations in

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6 According to the remarks of one of the participants in the Dialogue Workshop held in Beirut on 18 November 2015, only 3% of the youth are members of formal political movements and parties in Tunisia.

a number of different ways. Still a question looms large concerning the young generations' agency and the structural constraints and opportunities to channel these grievances and aspirations and turn them into formal and sustainable political, economic and social acts of change within their societies and polities.

1.3 The EU's Youth-Relevant Policies and Approach in the South and East Mediterranean Countries

In light of the pivotal position occupied by youth in the demographic makeup of the SEM region and the governments' prevailing narrative that depicts them as a "burden" and a "threat", the EU has developed its own approach to the youth issue in the region and fostered a number of policies. These policies date back to the late 1980s and were further developed in the framework of the third basket of the Barcelona Process (Partnership on Social, Cultural and Human Affairs) in 1995. Under the broad umbrella of "Euro-Med Youth programmes", the EU aims to promote intercultural dialogue among young people within the Euro-Mediterranean region, motivate active citizenship and contribute to the development of youth policies in the partner countries with a view to providing more and equal opportunities for young people in education and in the job market and to encouraging young people to actively participate in society. The EU defines youth as the 15-25 age bracket, although some of its initiatives encompass a much broader target group (up to around 40). As appears from the EU's general youth approach outlined in key European Commission documents, youth is conceptualised as a "priority of the European Union's social vision", as a result of which the EU needs "to nurture young human capital". This is done be creating "favourable conditions for youth to develop their skills, fulfil their potential, work, actively participate in society, and engage more in the building of the EU project" (European Commission, 2009).

These are arguably very general objectives that have not contributed either to redressing the conditions of youth in the SEM countries or to fostering a less securitised approach by the partner governments towards them. The EU has tried to mobilise the contribution of its SEM partner governments by strengthening the support structures at the local level and by decentralising the programme and fostering a closer relation with the beneficiaries through the creation of Euro-Med Youth Units throughout the region. In the fourth round (2010-2016), the Euro-Med Youth Programme IV has become part of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)'s Regional Indicative Programmes and so reflects the priorities set out in the national strategies: in theory this should make it more tailor-made and matching specific needs; in practice, there is still a rather uniform approach to the region.[7]

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7 Morocco has been the first country with a decentralised management of its Euro-Med Youth Programme in the framework of a tripartite agreement between the European Commission and the Moroccan Ministries of Youth and Sports, and of Finance.

In the context of the SEM countries, and especially after the Arab uprisings, the focus on youth by the EU has been revamped, although no major change in the narrative can be seen. On the one hand, youth exclusion and marginalisation have been depicted as having driven the protests and revolutions. The Tunisian uprising, for example, is framed as a "youth revolution" (Euro-Med Youth Programme, 2014a, p. 3), triggered by "high unemployment, exclusion, and disillusion" (Euro-Med Youth Programme, 2014a, p. 10). On the other, the renewed attention devoted to the promotion of "deep democracy" has led to an additional emphasis on youth participation in politics and society in the SEM countries as a contribution towards the development of civil society and democracy. Therefore, mainstreaming of youth issues and concerns has become a fundamental subject in all forms of dialogue and cooperation in the region with a view to fostering mutual understanding between young people in the Euro-Mediterranean region, fighting against stereotypes and prejudices, and to promoting active citizenship among young people and enhancing their sense of solidarity (Euro-Med Youth Programme, 2014b). This brief overview of the EU's approach and related youth policies underscores the extent to which in spite of a broad, all-encompassing rhetoric targeting youth and promoting the improvement of their conditions through their substantive participation in politics and society, the EU's youth approach in the SEM region still appears limited in its reach. So far, it has only managed to engage with a minority of young people who are already mobilised and active. One way out of this rhetoric-practice gap would be to adopt a horizontal youth-sensitive approach, as argued in the chapter by Isabel Schäfer in this work.

1.4 Conclusions and Outline of the Other Chapters of the Policy Study

Youth-related issues have gained new salience in the SEM region in the wake of the Arab uprisings while most of the challenges facing the young generations and lying at the heart of the protests and demonstrations of 2011 remain unresolved. Two main theoretical points can be drawn from the framework presented in this contribution. First, the category of youth is a social construction and has to be handled as such, both in the academic and the policy-oriented debates. This means being aware of the fact that all definitions regarding youth are relational and need to be flexible with a view to accounting for the impact of multiple identities. This also means that it is not possible to adopt an all-encompassing view but it is necessary to foster a fine-grained approach that illuminates the specific elements at the country and local levels.

Second, the centrality of youth also in light of the their important presence in the demographic makeup of the region where, broadly defined, they represent between 50%

and 70% of the total population – with important country-by-country differences – leads to the second important theoretical point. It is not possible to treat youth, their grievances and possible solutions to them in isolation from the broader structural conditions that characterise the SEM societies and their relations to the states. This means addressing the institutional and political/security-driven constraints and opportunities that constitute the environment in which youth is able or less able to further their claims and needs. Another important point to bear in mind when addressing youth issues in the SEM countries concerns the impact of a number of overlapping identities, such as age, gender, class, locality, and affiliations, including political, ideological, etc. One way of doing this is to apply intersectional theory, extensively used by feminist scholars, which argues that most sociological theory makes the mistake of examining only one variable at a time, thus neglecting their interlocking effect.

By taking these two theoretical points into account, the following contributions that make up the Policy Study delve into two case studies, the Egyptian and the Palestinian experiences respectively, highlighting specific aspects related to youth activism in the SEM region. The focus on these two cases, which are completely different from one another in terms of youth-related dynamics as well as the broader structural conditions that have a significant impact on youth's perceptions, goals and modes of action, helps enrich the regional perspective of the Policy Study. The second chapter on "The Quest for Accountability and Socio-Political Change in Egypt: Repertoire of Actions and Challenges for Youth Activism at the Local Level", by Nadine Abdalla, aims to fill a gap in terms of the lack of research on youth movements' repertoires of actions at the local level, the challenges confronting youth movements in a continuously changing political context, and the impact this has on local and national political dynamics. In order to accomplish this objective, this contribution provides a detailed assessment of the concrete actions of three youth movements that are active at the local level in Cairo, Egypt. The author demonstrates that in a socio-political context of generalised disappointment and increasing disengagement from socio-political life, providing training for young people to run for local elections gains special importance as this type of election often represents the only avenue for the inclusion of youth in the political system. On the one hand, being active at the local level facilitates the formation of youth cadres that are connected to their local communities as well as local lobbies that are able to exert pressure on the local government. Moreover, it permits the formation of a considerable social capital, which can be transformed into political capital in the future. On the other hand, participating in the local elections means offering youth the possibility to interact with people's daily problems, and therefore provide them with a chance to reach the grassroots level and build a stronger social base.

The third chapter delves into the case of Palestinian youth, with specific reference to the young generations in Gaza. The chapter, drafted by Omar Shaban, contends that the Palestinian people in general and Palestinian youth in particular were the most excited among the Arab people about the Arab uprisings as they were hoping that it would usher in a new phase of committed leadership in the Arab countries, which would ultimately provide support to end the Israeli occupation, stop the humiliating treatment of the Palestinian people and help in the national reconciliation process. Thus, the Palestinian people – who suffer from the existence of three authorities, namely Hamas in Gaza, the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank and the Israeli occupation of both areas – hurried to copy the Arab uprisings with thousands of Palestinian youths gathered in Gaza and the West Bank on 15 March 2012, asking for an end of the division between Hamas in Gaza and the Fatah movement in the West Bank. The paper further dwells on the reasons for the movement's failure in bringing about a fundamental change for the better. Against this backdrop, Palestinian youth have started to look for other options that might have a better chance to change reality. While radicalisation has become an option for some of them, the majority firmly believes that the key purpose of a Palestinian youth movement should be to encourage active political participation and foster the creation of a democratic and united polity that could work towards the shared goal of a free Palestine. All in all, the analysis presented in this chapter points to the extraordinary politicisation of Palestinian youth through their participation in the Intifada, which sometimes represents a burden rather than an asset for the young generations themselves.

The final contribution to the Policy Study analyses the potential contribution of the EU's policies in fostering a youth-sensitive approach. The author, Isabel Schäfer, focuses on Tunisia, where the unemployment rates for the young generation oscillate between 20% and 40%, depending on the region. Almost five years after the fall of the Ben Ali regime, the transitional process has not met the youth activists' expectations as young people continue to be underrepresented in political decision-making bodies and their daily and socioeconomic situations have changed little or not at all. According to the empirical evidence collected by the author, missing professional (and thereby personal) perspectives and youth unemployment feature as important factors for the decision of young individuals to turn towards political activism, and in exceptional cases towards religious extremism (Salafism in particular), as one form of radical youth activism. The risk of radicalisation among Tunisian youth is further underscored by the fact that around 5,000 young Tunisians have joined the Islamic State in Syria and the country itself has suffered from the problem of terrorist attacks on its own soil in 2015. The overall goal of the chapter is to argue in favour of a youth-sensitive, horizontal approach to youth in all

the EU's policies, meaning that substantive inclusion through veritable empowerment, political participation, labour market access and mobility and education opportunities can only derive from a comprehensive rethinking of the prevailing narrative associated with youth in the SEM region. In other words, what is needed is a new cultural/policy framework to tackle youth-related issues.

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2. The Quest for Accountability and Socio-Political Change in Egypt: Repertoires of Actions and Challenges for Youth Activism at the Local Level

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Immediately after President Hosni Mubarak's resignation in February 2011, the youth movements that had triggered the 25 January uprising became a major part of the political scene. Politicised youth seeking to exert political influence coalesced into various kinds of organisations claiming to defend the revolution's aims, expressed in the slogan "Justice, Freedom and Dignity", and pushed for their inclusion in the new system. It is therefore not surprising that youth activism in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings has attracted wide attention in academia. Hoffman and Jamal (2012), for example, emphasise the characteristics of the Arab world's current youth generation compared to earlier cohorts, explaining their grievances and how their political attitudes and behaviours vary across them. Murphy (2012, p. 5) considers Arab youth as a phenomenon rather than a social category constituted by "a lived and shared generational narrative of the exclusion and marginalisation which have resulted from post-independence state failures in the political, economic and social realms." A considerable number of studies look at Egyptian youth activists' instrumental use of social media in mobilising the public and how they have been "learning citizenship, forming a generational consciousness, and actively engaging in politics through cyber activism" (Herrera, 2012). Others have focused more on the dynamics of the political engagement of youth in Egypt (Sika, 2012) as well as cycles of contention prior to the 25 January uprising and their impact on triggering the revolution (Shehata, 2012; El-Mahdi, 2014). The accumulated research on youth movements in general, and on Egyptian ones in particular, analyses the characteristics of the youth who triggered the Arab Spring: their history of activism, the cycles of contention they experienced, the new tools of mobilisation they used, as well as the particular forms of political activism and organisational structures they adopted. Academic work focused on youth activism in Egypt but thus far lacks research on youth movement's repertoires of actions at the local level, the challenges confronting youth movements in a continuously changing political context and the impact this has on local and national political dynamics.

This contribution assumes that the youth movements affected the transformation process beyond just providing an initial and ephemeral upsurge (O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986, pp. 55-56). Rather, we assume that the youth movements engaged in continuous and dynamic interactions with the successive rulers in the aftermath of the 2011 uprising. Indeed, the rapidly changing power relations forced the youth movements to adapt their strategies and tactics. Overall, the youth movements did split after 2011 into distinct groups with different objectives, goals and strategies. One can observe that three strategies were adopted following the uprisings: (1) street politics to pressure the successive rulers into meeting the youth activists' "revolutionary" demands; (2) a gradual change of approach which consisted of engaging politically and building social structures that could induce change gradually by "colonising" new public and political

spaces; (3) the alliance with the regime that was in need of building a new legitimacy in the aftermath of the ousteing of President Morsi on 3 July 2013. Hence, this chapter looks at the repertoires of action, the strategies and the challenges faced by three organisations that are either youth-led initiatives or youth-led organisations, and which are part of the broader gradual change approach and predominantly concerned with achieving socio-political objectives through their activism at the local level. Those movements are: (1) the Front of Municipalities of Egypt (FME) (*gabihit mahliat masr*); (2) the Municipalities of Al-Dokki and Al-Agouza (MDA) (*mahliat Al-Dokki wal Agouza*); and (3) the Popular Coalition of Ard Al-Liwaa (PCAL) (*el-i'tila'af al-sha'by le-ard al-liwaa*). While the first movement is spread all over the Egyptian Republic, the second and third are only based in the Giza Governorate. Given the fact that the Giza Governorate is one of the major governorates that suffer from the presence of a wide number of informal areas, it has witnessed the emergence of a wide range of youth groups interested in working at the local level. Despite their different repertoire of actions, these youth movements defend and enact what Asef Bayat calls "the youth habitus, [...] a series of dispositions, ways of being, feeling, and carrying oneself (e.g., a greater tendency for experimentation, adventurism, idealism, autonomy, mobility, and change) that are associated with the sociological fact of 'being young'" (2010, p. 118). Indeed, these three movements share the same collective identity insofar as they aim to defend or pursue their collective aspiration for genuine change.

The importance of discussing youth activism at the local level in Egypt can be explained by several factors, the most important of which is that segments of the youth activists have perceived the local elections as an opportunity for social and political participation and as a chance to implement socio-political change. This is especially because in the 2014 Constitution 25% (around 13,000) of local councils' seats were reserved for youth (article 180 defines youth as a societal category comprised of those aged 21 to 35). Other motives include (1) the potential of conducting activities on the local level to help youth to build a social capital that can be transformed into a political capital in the future and (2) the ability of youth activism to mediate between the people and the government and exert pressure on the latter to become more accountable to the people and on the former to be more active in claiming their socioeconomic rights. Worth noting is that the municipalities are considered as an important conduit for getting in touch with the public as they deal with citizens' daily problems and their need for social services and infrastructures, such as electricity, water and roads. This is especially important in light of the dissolution of the local councils in the aftermath of the 2011 uprising and, thus, the absence of any authority that can either mediate between the people and the local authorities or monitor the performance of the latter. Thanks to the 2014 Constitution,

young people have been granted the privilege of running on 25% of the seats in the local councils whenever the new local elections are held. Finally, youth activism at the local level sheds light on the real needs of the citizens and the real problems that they face in their everyday life. Therefore, this explains one of the main reasons that led to the stalemate of the transition in Egypt: the disconnection between large segments of those who had triggered change and large segments of those who have currently chosen not to follow them.

This chapter relies on around ten semi-structured interviews with the youth leaders of these three groups conducted during the period of July 2015-January 2016. It also builds on the author's participant observation and informal encounters with a variety of youth and other political groups' representatives before and after the 25 January uprising. Each of the three main sections of this chapter discusses a particular repertoire of action adopted by the three youth movements that are interested in implementing their activities at the local level and the impact this has on the ongoing socio-political dynamics. The first section focuses on the movements' choice of raising awareness about the importance of local governance and training the youth either to run local elections or to implement local initiatives. The second section centres on supporting local communities and helping them to push the local government to be more accountable and responsive to their claims. The third section discusses the formation of lobbies from the local communities whose aim is to propose infrastructural and services projects and to exert pressure on the local authorities to achieve them.

2.1 Advocacy and Training: A Way to Increase Youth Inclusion?

The Front of Egypt's Municipalities (FEM) (*gabhit mahliat Masr*) founded in November 2011 has mainly made use of two strategies: (1) lobbying on the best legislation regarding local governance in Egypt, on the one hand, and (2) raising awareness about the importance of the municipalities and training potential candidates for local elections, on the other. The Front's mission is thus to work to enhance people's participation and to monitor the local government through scientific and innovative training programmes. Therefore, its plan for action consists, chronologically, of the following elements: (1) lobbying for legislation that achieves decentralisation, (2) raising awareness about the importance of the municipalities and their role, (3) providing training for the youth that would like to run for local elections, (4) supporting the organisation of electoral campaigns for the previously trained youth who are supposed to run for local elections[8] (whose date has not yet been set).[9]

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8 Interview with the General Coordinator of the FEM and ex-leading member of the Justice Party (JP), a youth party with a social liberal orientation, Cairo, August 2015.
9 It is worth noting that the law that should organise the local elections has not yet been issued.

The FEM regroups several movements that either work on the local level such as "The Forum for Participation and Commitment" (FPC) (*Multaka al-mosharka wal ertibat*) or those who are specialised in monitoring elections such as "We Watch You" (WWY) movement (*Shayfinkom*).[10] The FPC was founded in November 2011 by a group of youth residents in the east of Cairo, which regroups districts such as Heliopolis, Hadaya Al-Kuba, Nasr City, Al-Waili, Al-Abasyia, Al-Zaytoun, Ain Shams, Al-Marg. It aims to act as a bridge between the people and the state through supporting potential networks willing and able to monitor the government at the local level. In this respect, they have signed a protocol of cooperation with a number of political parties: The Constitution (*Al-Dustour*) Party (CP) established by Mohamed ElBaradei, the former Secretary-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, who had withdrawn from the presidential race in January 2012; The Strong Egypt (*Masr al- Kawia*) Party (SEP), founded by Abdel Moneim Abul Futuh, a prominent dissident of the Muslim Brotherhood and popular among its affiliated youth as well as the fourth-place contender in the 2012 presidential elections; and, finally, the 6th April Movement which was founded in April 2008 by a group of cyber activists and triggered, via Facebook, the idea of organising a general strike in Egypt. In parallel, the group strives to develop the social ties between the people of each of the districts they are working in by organising social gatherings and common activities such as carnivals, bicycle rides, etc. This kind of tactic aims to form a strong local group or a sort of local lobby that is able to monitor the local government and to exert pressure on it.[11] For its part, the WWY was founded in 2005 by a non-partisan youth group that took the initiative to monitor the 2005 presidential elections through a wide network of thousands of volunteers that were spread all over the country.[12] Its aim is to enhance the accountability of the government through the monitoring of elections and through providing training in election monitoring. It has therefore participated in monitoring the parliamentary and presidential elections held in the aftermath of the 2011 uprising.

The FEM has lobbied to push for the adoption of articles that promote decentralisation and enhance youth participation in local elections in the 2012 and 2014 Constitution. It has also launched campaigns against the 2012 Constitution that neglected to take into consideration their demands regarding the local administration. The FEM has interacted with the Committee of the 100 that had the task to edit the Constitution under Muslim Brotherhood rule, and has tried to pass articles that foster decentralisation. However, the version of the Constitution which was adopted by the committee completely failed to take their suggestions into account. Consequently, in November 2012 they launched a campaign called "Take Care of Your Constitution" (*ilhak dustourak*) asking people to vote "No" in the Constitutional Referendum held in December 2012. Not only have the movements composing the Front participated in this campaign, but also several political

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10 Interview with the General Coordinator of the FEM and ex-leading member of the JP, Cairo, August 2015.

11 Interview with the co-founder of the FPC, Cairo, August 2015.

12 For more information, see http://www.shayfeencom.org/pageView.aspx?pageid=3

organisations, such as the Egyptian Social Democratic Party (ESDP) (*al-hizb al masry al dimocrati al-igtimaa'i*) and the Popular Current (PC) (*al-Tayar al-shaaby*) founded by Hamdeen Sabahy, the third place contender in the 2012 presidential elections, have interacted with this campaign and promoted it.[13] According to the General Coordinator of the FEM, millions of posters explaining the FEM position on the Constitution have been distributed in the main bus and metro stations, not only in Cairo but also in other governorates.[14]

On the other hand, the FEM has actively participated in the drafting of the 2014 Constitution and has lobbied to pass articles that foster decentralisation and youth participation in local councils. For the FEM, the way forward was: (1) to ask academic experts on local governance who are already represented on the advisory board of the movement to attend with the Front's members the listening committees that were organised by the Committee of the 50;[15] 2) to exert pressure on this committee in order to convince its members of their views on the local administration. According to the General Coordinator of the FEM, it has succeeded in convincing 28 of them to adopt their views, which ultimately meant that the articles related to the municipalities have been passed with the acceptance of 47 out of 50 members. The main points that the FEM has pushed the Committee of the 50 to adopt were: (1) guaranteeing the administrative, financial and economic autonomy of the local administration (article 176 of the Constitution); (2) ensuring the independence of the budget of the municipalities, which ensures that the local councils can decide their own needs autonomously without the interference of the centre (article 182 of the Constitution); (3) guaranteeing that the local councils can withdraw confidence from the local government officials (article 180 of the Constitution).[16]

In order to raise the awareness of the youth regarding local elections and train candidates to run them, the FEM has worked towards organising training in the local administration and the local councils, and has cooperated closely with the political parties and movements. The FEM has organised several meetings with research centres such as the Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies (ACPSS) and the Danish Egyptian Dialogue Institute (DEDI). The Front has introduced in its training course practical workshops which consist of organising a "Shadow Local Council" (mahliat al-zel) imitating the idea of the "Shadow Government". Therefore, the trainees are invited to study the work of the local councils, conducting research on the needs of the districts they are representing, the problems they are facing and suggest proposals for resolving them. This kind of practical training is supposed to provide a chance for the politicised youth to gain hands-on training in building societal networks and communicating with

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13 Interview with the General Coordinator of the FEM and ex-leading member of the JP, Cairo, August 2015.

14 Ibid.

15 The latter is the group that was appointed by the interim president to review a draft constitution prepared by ten legal experts.

16 Interview with the General Coordinator of the FEM and ex-leading member of the JP, Cairo, August 2015.

state officials.[17] The municipalities are indeed perceived as an important conduit for getting in touch with the public as they deal with citizens' daily problems and their need for social services and infrastructure, such as electricity, water and roads.

Importantly, some of the FEM leaders have already been leading members in some of the political parties. Through those members, the FEM has thus succeeded in pushing these political parties to adopt the FEM enthusiasm for local elections and activism. Therefore, some of those FEM leaders have introduced committees specialised in local activities in the parties to which they are affiliated. This was the case of the Egyptian Social Democratic Party (ESDP). Others have become officially responsible for these committees in their respective parties. This was the case of the Constitution Party (CP) and the Strong Egypt Party (SEP). In the ESDP, a training school called the "Cadre School" was established to provide training for youth, including Training-of-Trainers (TOT), soft skills (such as public speaking) and training in electoral campaigns, etc. Moreover, young members participate in awareness-raising campaigns and medical convoys in slum areas to interact with the local community (Abdalla, 2015). In the CP, one of the leaders of the FEM founded a committee that focused on local activities in the party and that widely promoted the idea of the shadow councils. The party members were thus encouraged and trained to organise campaigns proposing solutions to certain local problems (such as cleaning the streets or reforming the roads) in order to push the responsible parties to intervene.[18] In the SEP, one of the leaders of the FEM headed the Local Development Committee in the party. This committee provides political training and education for the party's members and encourages young people to interact with the wider society through local activities to acquire experience and skills. Imitating the role of the local councils, the committee's members carry out research on local problems and try to enter in contact with the officials to resolve them.[19] In sum, the Constitution as well as Strong Egypt Party prepared their youths to run local elections by providing practical training courses related to public management and organising citizen campaigns to deal with such local challenges as getting streets cleaned and roads improved. Thus, the youth have tried to solve local problems by playing a mediating role between local officials and the people. Despite the disengagement of large segments of the youth affiliated to political parties starting from the summer of 2013, the remaining hope is that those who remain engaged focus more on local social initiatives with the aim of building social capital that could be transformed into political capital in the future (Bourdieu, 1986; Abdalla, 2016).

In general, the FEM work intersects with the aspirations of the youth, especially those who are affiliated to political parties and are willing to run local elections. Generally, those youth consider local elections as an opportunity for socio-political participation and inclusion. Furthermore, the parties with a majority of youth members, such as the Constitution Party

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17 Interview with a leading member of the FEM and former head of the committee of the municipalities at the CP, Cairo, July 2015.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

(CP), the Strong Egypt Party (SEP), the Justice Party (JP) and the Free Egypt Party (FEP), consider that taking part in the local elections is one the most important political activities to be undertaken in the short term for two reasons: on the one hand, these parties acknowledge that their chances of winning seats in the 2015 parliamentary elections are small, especially due to the electoral law adopted under the interim president in May 2014. Article 3 stipulates a mixed system for electing representatives and gives greater weight to the majority vote system, through which 420 individual deputies (around 78% of seats) are elected. Another 120 deputies (around 22%), distributed among the four districts designated by the election law, are elected through a closed list system. The president appoints 27 deputies (5%). The majority vote system weakens the influence of political parties and favours the old tribal and business elite's clientelist networks. In addition, the new closed list system, in which the composition of the lists have to comply with rather complex criteria, limits the chances of parties with youth majorities, since each list can only win as a whole, by obtaining an absolute majority of the vote in a district, or lose as a whole. This deprives the list system of one of its most important characteristics: proportional representation. In contrast, these parties perceive an opportunity to win a number of seats in local elections, whenever they take place, thanks to the 2014 Constitution, which reserves 25% (around 13,000 seats) of local councils' seats for youths. On the other hand, the youth-dominated parties perceive the local elections as an opportunity to build their structures from the ground up and a chance for their youth members to build societal networks and communicate with state officials (Abdalla, 2015, pp. 24-25).

Therefore, one should conclude by saying that, for the FEM, providing training and encouraging the youth to run for local elections is not only a major target but also one of the very few avenues that remain open for their inclusion in the political system. By raising awareness of the importance of local elections, not only does the FEM increase the youth's demand for better local governance but also offers them an avenue for interacting with people's daily problems, and therefore provides them with a chance to reach the grassroots level and build a stronger social base. Yet, the major challenge they are facing is the increasing disengagement of the youth from societal and political activities in a socio-political context characterised by a generalised disappointment.

2.2 Creating and Supporting "Popular Committees": A Way to Empower People?

The initiative of the municipalities of Al-Dokki and Agouza (D&A) (*mahliat al-dokki wal agouza*), which was part of a bigger movement called the "Municipalities Movement"

(MM) (*harakit mahliat*), chose for its main strategy to support local communities and help them to push the local government to be more accountable and responsive to their needs. The MM was founded in early 2012 by one of the leaders of the Popular Current (PC). The movement had four main objectives: (1) the formulation of laws and regulations that promote decentralisation as well as the empowerment of local councils in order to make them able to monitor the executive bodies effectively, (2) raising public awareness of the importance of local councils, (3) training young people to participate in local elections, (4) conducting surveys to strengthen understanding of the needs of the voters and the monitoring of local councils. Through publicity on mainstream media and social media, the youth joined the movement and local groups were formed in several local areas or districts in the different governorates.[20] One of these groups was the team of D&A, which was founded in the area of Dokki and Agouza in the Giza Governorate.[21] While these are considered as middle class and upper middle class neighbourhoods, they are surrounded by poor and marginalised areas.

The group was founded by five people, eventually reaching 45 members by the end of 2012. Their members worked mainly on raising awareness of the role of the local councils through organising training and campaigns. However, because of the disappointment of the youth with the current exclusionary and repressive situation, their disengagement increased and the number of the members of the D&A initiative declined to 13.[22] By the end of 2012, the D&A team decided to work undependably from the framework of the Municipalities Movement, which was dissolved leaving space for the local team to work autonomously.[23] Most of the members of the D&A belong to the middle class and are residents of the Dokki or Agouza district. Over the year of 2012, their main aim changed from only focusing on raising awareness of the importance of local councils to focus on procedures through which they can practically empower people in the marginalised areas. Hence, they decided to work on supporting local communities and help them push the local government to be more accountable and responsive to their needs. Their strategy consists of working with the people of these marginalised areas and constitutes "popular committees", representative of the people of a specific area. Their role should be to monitor the work of the local officers and exert pressure on them to achieve the local community demands.[24]

The first place they decided to work with and which will be considered later on as their success story is the "Estate of the Kids of Allam" (EKA) (*Izbet Awlad Allam*), located at the heart of the upper middle class neighbourhood of Dokki. It is a short walk from the Shooting Club – a sports club frequented by upper middle class Egyptians.[25] In the

20 Interview with the co-founder of the Municipalities Movement (MM), Cairo, July 2015.
21 Interview with a member of the D&A initiative and member of the local development committee of the SEP, Cairo, July 2015.
22 Ibid.
23 Interview with the co-founder of the MM, Cairo, July 2015.
24 Interview with a member of the D&A initiative, Cairo, August 2015.
25 For more information about the EKA (*Izbet Awlad Allam*), please visit the website of the urban development initiative called "Solidarity" (*Tadamun*). Retrieved February 12, 2016, from http://www.tadamun.info/?post_type=city&p=4562&lang=en&lang=en#.Vfq7y-8VjIU

beginning, the D&A initiative visited the place in order to meet the residents of the EKA and conduct interviews and focus groups in order to identify the needs and set the priorities regarding the problems of the residents. In spite of being frustrated because of the lack of services, the people of this area have never mobilised to push the local government to respond to their queries. Herein lies the role of the D&A team during those preliminary meetings, forming an active nucleus of people reunited in the popular committee of EKA. The D&A team agreed to support the newly-formed EKA committee in exerting pressure on the local officials in order to resolve three main problems: the lack of gas cylinders, the lack of bread subsidies and the housing ownership problem.[26]

Indeed, the top priority was to improve the distribution of gas cylinders. The residents of the place complained that the company Botagasko visits the region once every two weeks and does not provide a sufficient number of gas cylinders for the region. After several negotiations between the D&A and EKA teams, on the one hand, and the Giza governor as well as the Subsidies Department, on the other, the former succeeded to convince the latter to increase the number of cylinders that are sold by the company to the EKA residents. More importantly, the D&A team succeeded in convincing the Subsidies Department to allow the EKA popular committee to monitor the process of distribution of those cylinders to avoid any violations.[27] In 2013, the D&A team also succeeded in addressing the problem of subsidised bread. In order to get subsidised bread, the residents of the EKA had to go to a bakery that is located outside of their district. They thus had to tolerate long queues and very often the bread was not sufficient. Therefore, the D&A teams and the EKA popular committee tried together to communicate with the Ministry of Subsidies in order to convince the latter to distribute the bread in the EKA location. After a few months of negotiations, the kiosk was founded.[28]

Finally, the D&A team are currently working on housing ownership of EKA residents. The problem is that the EKA lies on a plot of land that falls under the *waqf* system, which is similar to the western concept of trust laws.[29] In light of this, the Ministry of Awqaf made use of a form of tenure called " *ikr*" which allows individuals to pay a rent to the Ministry in exchange for making use of a plot of *waqf* land. The EKA falls under this system but *ḥikr* tenure is no longer legally recognised and residents living on such *ḥikr* lands are expected to use certain legal provisions that allow them to purchase the land and legalise their situation.[30] Some residents tried to legalise their status through informal negotiations with the Egyptian Authority of Awqaf (EAA) (the authority that is concerned with the management of the ministry's property) but negotiations reached stalemate[31] because

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26 Interview with a member of the D&A initiative and member of the local development committee of the SEP, Cairo, July 2015.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Most of the properties that were donated to the Ministry of Awqaf were plots of land that needed to be farmed or maintained in order to continue to generate income.

30 For more information about the problem of land tenure, please visit the website of the urban development initiative called "Solidarity" (Tadamun). Retrieved February 12, 2016,

from http://www.tadamun.info/?post_type=city&p=4562& amp;lang=en&lang=en#.Vfq7y-8VjIU

31 Ibid.

of disagreements over the price of the land.[32] The D&A team is currently playing a networking role between the Popular Committee of the EKA and some NGOs such as the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) that can provide technical and legal support for EKA residents and help them to reach a compromise regarding the legal tenure of their land.[33]

On the other hand, the D&A face several challenges such as: (1) the bureaucratic obstacles associated with dealing with the local and central government agencies, as well as the lack of transparency in terms of information, a fact that makes the process of monitoring even harder; (2) the consecutive reshuffles among government officials that occurred in the aftermath of the 2011 uprising. For example, the head of the Al-Dokk district has changed twice since the D&A team became active. This is problematic because, in the absence of local councils and laws that manage the relation between local communities and local officials, only two issues become influential: the personal willingness of the local official to cooperate, on the one hand, and the personal relationship that the D&A team builds with him/her, on the other; among the other challenges, it is also worth mentioning, (3) the re-emergence of the clientelist networks linked to the ancient regime in a large number of Egyptian neighbourhoods. They either try to exploit the successes of the youth groups for their own political gain or they deploy efforts and money to provide social services for the people for the sake of getting their voices heard in the parliamentary elections that were held in October-December 2015. This dynamic makes it harder for the D&A committee to form popular committees that are willing to provide social services by monitoring the local government and exerting pressure on it, rather resorting to clientelist network; finally, (4) the disengagement of the youth from the political and public sphere's activities in the latest period, and thus the decreasing number of the volunteers that are willing to work with the initiative represent major problems. Those who are interested in social and political activities prefer to focus, currently, on charity activities to avoid repression.[34] As mentioned earlier, the current number of the team decreased to only 13 people. If the team remains unable to recruit new members, this can indeed affect the sustainability of the initiative.

Finally, as the EKA popular committee had become able, starting from 2014, to autonomously manage its work of monitoring the local government, the D&A is currently focusing on a new area. For the next year, they will mainly focus on two regions in both areas related to refuge collection and recycling. This is indeed a major problem in several regions of the Giza Governorate. Despite the fact that collection of solid waste is the clear responsibility of the government, in the countryside this role is not carried and there are not even the mechanisms in place to do so. In parallel, the D&A will work on extending

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32 The EKA's strategic location, which makes it quite valuable and an area for investment, pushes the EAA to fix higher prices.

33 Interview with a member of the D&A initiative and member of the local development committee of the ESP, Cairo, July 2015.

34 Interview with a member of the D&A initiative, Giza, August 2015.

the organisation of training courses to build the capacity and raise the awareness of the popular committees as well as the youth groups that are interested in working at the local level to prepare them to run local elections.[35] Their long-term aim is to form a sort of a social movement or a lobby that is able to exert pressure on the authorities not only at the local level but also at the central level. This should happen by spreading their model in the Cairo and Giza Governorates and by thereby supporting new popular committees or a new nucleus of active people that are willing/able to represent the residents of their regions.[36]

In sum, one can conclude by saying that the activism of the D&A committee at the local level has the potential to induce change in the longer term since it facilitates the formation of local lobbies that are willing and able to exert pressure on the local authorities. Moreover, the idea of establishing networks between local lobbies that are widely spread is in theory an effective tool for inducing gradual socio-political change. However, the D&A committee has for the moment a very limited outreach that does not even cover the whole neighbourhood of Dokki and Agouza but only a tiny space within it which is the EKA place. After all, the lack of human resources limits the capacity of the movement, at least for the time being, to affect a wider bottom-up change.

2.3 Playing a Mediating Role: A Way to Build Local Lobbies and Social Capital?

The Popular Coalition of Ard Al-Liwaa (PCAL) (*el-i'tila'af al-sha'by le-ard al-liwaa*) was founded by a group of young residents of this area who participated in the 2011 uprising with the main aim of proposing developmental projects that can respond to the lack of infrastructure in Ard Al- Liwaa, on the one hand, and lobby or exert pressure on the local authorities to achieve them, on the other. According to its residents, Ard Al-Liwaa has previously fallen under the jurisdiction of rural county (*markaz*) Kird sa but was later incorporated into the urban neighbourhood Al-`Agūza.[37] The Cairo Lab for Urban Studies, Training and Environmental Research (CLUSTER), an institution that aims to provide spaces for critical urban discourse and design practice and which prepared several projects for Ard Al-Liwaa define the latter in the following way: "Ard al-Liwa lies in the informal belt in the city of Giza, aligned with the railway and Zomor canal that extends north from Imbaba and Bashtil to Omrania in the South. Like many informal areas, Ard al-Liwa suffers from numerous problems, including a lack of services and open areas, as well as a deteriorated infrastructure. There is a crisis at the junctures where Ard al-Liwa makes contact with Mohandesin: a limited number of crossings and bridges have created

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35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
37 Interview with one of the founders of the PCAL, Giza, September 2015.

traffic bottlenecks that endanger pedestrians, particularly children and the elderly. In addition, the spread of street vendors, informal markets and construction non-compliance with building standards has led to an unsafe environment."[38]

The founders of the PCAL are five non-partisan youths who got to know each other as they are neighbours. Most PCAL founders belong to the middle class and possess university degrees. According to one of the PCAL founders, contrary to the majority of the residents of Ard Al-Liwaa, the PCAL founders are in contact with different classes or segments of the society, which enriches them in terms of networks and experiences. Their participation in the 2011 uprising increased their feelings of ownership and inspired them to mobilise within the place where they were born. Their aim was thus to serve their neighbours and empower them at the same time. A few months after its foundation by the end of 2011, the PCAL reached the number of around 30 people.[39]

The PCAL has succeeded in the aftermath of the 2011 uprising to push the local authorities to respond positively, at least to two of their suggestions, whereas the third request is still pending: the first one was the foundation of a local police station. Despite the necessity of the presence of one of them in such marginalised area where drugs smuggling and crimes are widespread, Ard al-Liwaa did not have a local police unit until the 2011 uprisings. Ard Al-Liwaa residents had to go to police stations located outside of their district. Indeed, the inefficiency of the local council's members under Mubarak was an obstacle for exerting the necessary pressure on the local government to pursue the residents' request.[40] After several meetings with the governor of Giza, the PCAL was asked to search for a piece of land where the governorate can build the police station. This demand was difficult to deal with: given the strategic location of Ard Al-Liwaa, the lands were very expensive there. The PCAL suggested building the police station on part of the land that was owned by the Giza Governorate and the governor accepted the proposition.[41] It was also agreed that the PCAL would take the responsibility for making the necessary preparations that are needed for launching the police unit, such as sewage, ceramics and wall paintings. Finally, in April 2012, the Giza governor and the head of the Giza security unit inaugurated Ard Al-Liwa's new police station.[42]

The second one was paving several streets and lighting the Ard Al-Liwaa area. In the framework of the projects managed by the fund for slum development (*sanduk tatwir al-*

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38 For more information, visit the CLUSTER website: http://clustercairo.org/cluster/design/ard-al-liwa

39 Interview with one of the founders of the PCAL, Cairo, September 2015.

40 For further information, please visit the website of the urban developmental initiative for slum areas called "Margins" (Hawamish), "The Police Station of Ard Al-Liwaa (nuktat shurtat ard al-liwaa)". Retrieved February 12, 2016, from http://www.hawamish.com/ard-projects/%d9%86%d9%82%d8%b7%d8%a9-%d8%b4%d8%b1%d8%b7%d8%a9-%d8%a3%d8%b1%d8%b6-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%84%d9%88%d8%a7%d8%a1/

41 Interview with one of the founders of the PCAL, Giza, September 2015.

42 For further information, please see: With photos… the Giza Governor and the Giza Head of the Security inaugurate the police station of Ard al-Liwaa (*Bel sowar …muhafiz al-giza wa modir amin al-giza yaftatifan nuktet al-shurta be ard al-liwaa*), Al-Youm Al-Sabie', 23 April 2012. Retrieved February 12, 2016, from http://www.youm7.com/story/0000/0 /0/-/660505#.Vr36Ao-cHIU

ashwaeyat), founded in 2008 and affiliated to the Council of Ministers,[43] the engineering authorities of the armed forces (*al hayaa' al-handasia lel kuwat al-musalaha*) implemented and supported several projects in marginalised areas in cooperation with the designated governorate. After a process of internal voting inside of the PCAL, the members agreed to propose and even exert pressure on the Giza governor to allow the PCAL to take on the entrepreneurship of the project of paving and lighting Ard Al-Liwaa and thus providing job opportunities for young people living in the area. In order to implement the project, a small construction company was founded by some of the PCAL's founders.[44] However, while the paving and lighting project was highly beneficial to Ard Al-Liwaa and successful also in terms of creating job opportunities for the local population, it also somehow affected the image of the PCAL among certain sectors of the region. The reason behind it is that the company managers of the PCAL considered this a job and expected to be remunerated in return. This was the first time that some of the PCAL leading members had worked on a non-voluntary basis. This has led also to a sort of split among the PCAL: one of its founders considered this behaviour contradictory to the PCAL principles. Thus, he left the Coalition and found a new association called the Union of the Ard Al-Liwaa Youth (*itihad shabab ard al-liwaa*).[45]

The biggest project that the PCAL initiated starting from 2012 and is still lobbying to achieve is the transformation of the last plot of land (around 12 Fedan) in Ard Al-Liwaa, which falls again under the *waqf* system, into a services complex that can serve the residents. While the Ministry of Awqaf was seeking to build new houses on this land, the PCAL thought to transform it into a concrete tool for the development of the Ard Al-Liwaa area: it should thus accommodate hospitals, schools, gardens and cultural space. In coordination with the Cairo Lab for Urban Studies, Training and Environmental Research (CLUSTER), a complete plan for this services complex was developed. After preparing this project, the PCAL sought to negotiate with the Ministry of Awqaf the right of the Giza Governorate to own the land and, therefore, their right to implement the project. In order to get help in terms of linkage with state officials, the PCAL thought of contacting Dr. Amr Elshobaki, the MP who represented the district of Al-Agouza, Al-Dokki and Embaba in the 2012 parliament. Indeed, he adopted the project and promised to support the PCAL. He succeeded in organising a meeting with Prime Minister Kamal Al-Ganzouri to present their project and ask for bureaucratic facilitation in terms of land tenure. However, in the aftermath of the 2012 presidential elections, the situation changed rapidly. The PCAL was unable to communicate with the newly-formed government. The process of lobbying for their project entered a phase of stalemate in the Muslim Brotherhood era. In the aftermath of President Morsi's ousting in July 2013, the Minister of Housing Ibrahim Mahlab was very cooperative and the project took a great step forward. After several meetings, the Ministry of Housing reached an agreement with the Ministry of Awqaf, according to which the Administration of Urban Societies (*Hayeit al-*

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43 For further information about the Slums Development Fund, please visit the website of the urban development initiative called "Solidarity" (Tadamun). Retrieved February 12, 2016, from http://www.tadamun.info/?post_type=gov-entity&p=4200#.Vr4WU4-cHIU

44 Interview with one of the founders of the PCAL, Giza, January 2016.

45 Interview with one of the founders of the PCAL, Giza, September, 2015

mugtaa't al-omrania), which is affiliated to the Ministry of Housing, agreed to give a piece of land in the 6th October City to the Ministry of Awqaf and receive the Ard Al-Liwaa plot of land in return. The latter should therefore be offered to the Giza Governorate and the PCAL to implement the project. However, this process was interrupted because of the disagreement over the price of this piece of land. This is where the project is currently stuck. More lobbying and more pressure need to be exerted both on the Giza Governorate, and the Ministries of Awqaf and Housing to find a solution to this stalemate.[46]

It is obvious that one of the main challenges the PCAL is facing are the bureaucratic obstacles that make the process of lobbying even harder and prevent the youth from reaping the fruits of their efforts. Similarly to the D&A initiative, the consecutive reshuffles among the central and local government officials have affected their capacity to work effectively. More importantly, the change in the balance of power in the aftermath of 3 July 2013 affects de facto the PCAL ability to advocate and lobby for its projects, both at the local and central levels. Finally, the PCAL suffers from the fact that the local authorities continue to stick to their top-down approach and refuse to consider the PCAL as an interlocutor with whom they can discuss projects for the Ard al-Liwaa area before their implementation. Indeed, the local authorities continue to refuse to integrate the local mobilised communities into the decision-making process. To conclude, one can say that the PCAL work facilitated the formation of youth cadres that are connected with their local communities by developing the social capital that can be transformed into political capital in the future, for example in the local elections. However, the PCAL is liable to fall in the trap of producing social services without empowering people.

2.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

It is possible to argue that these three youth movements have the originality of having an agenda that puts socio-political activism at the local level at the core of their activities, whereas others were mostly focused on political protests. While thus far street politics was one of the main tools that the youth have resorted to in order to exert pressure on the authorities, their activism at the local level has the potential of providing them with a newer and more efficient tool for doing this in the longer term. During the Egyptian transition, youth activism via street demonstrations has helped young people to stop some of the decisions they were opposing but has never allowed them to implement their own agenda. On the other hand, being active at the local level facilitates the formation of youth cadres that are connected to their local communities as well as local lobbies that are able to exert pressure on the local government. Moreover, it permits the formation of a considerable social capital

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46 Interview with one of the founders of the PCAL, Giza, September 2015.

that can be transformed into a political capital in the future, in the local elections for example. However, for the youth movements to induce gradual socio-political change via their work at the local level, they have to increase their human resources to be able to extend their outreach, on the one hand, and take care not to fall falling into the trap of producing social services without empowering people, on the other.

Furthermore, in a socio-political context of a generalised disappointment among the youth and increasing disengagement from socio-political activities, providing training for the youth to run for local elections gains special importance. Local elections, which are not yet held, are now becoming almost the only avenue for youth inclusion in the political system. On the one hand, participating in these elections means offering an avenue for youth to interact with the people's daily problems, and therefore providing them with a chance to reach the grassroots level and build a stronger social base. On the other hand, delaying their organisation or issuing a law that does not guarantee a fair process among candidates is high risk for a regime that has, almost, closed all possible channels for political participation.

As for the European Union's policy-makers, we recommend that in the current situation where actors cooperating with foreigners are discredited internally, they adopt a cautious approach when dealing with local activists as contacts with EU's officials may complicate their work, but keep on exerting pressure on the Egyptian regime to facilitate the work of European civil society organisations. On the one hand, European civil society organisations could launch political awareness sessions and campaigns targeting Egyptian parliamentarians and policy-makers about the importance of youth activism at the local level. On the other, they can offer Egyptian youth leaders two important facilities that are necessary for their activism:

(1) Technical knowledge and capacity building: European civil society organisations can offer Egyptian youth leaders technical knowledge regarding the work of local councils and the management of democratic parties. Support related to the know-how of reaching out to society, building grassroots and representing the claims of the local communities is of great importance. Training related to the most efficient way for holding election campaigns is no less important.

(2) Political education and programmatic support: Training courses reserved for politically educating youth leaders and forming political cadres with clear programmatic visions would be very helpful. In particular, exchanges between political parties in Europe (as well as their European umbrella organisations) and their Egyptian counterparts should be encouraged.

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3. The Arab Spring and the Palestinian Youth Movement: Different Challenges and Priorities

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It can be stated with great confidence that the Palestinian people in general, and the Palestinian youth in particular, were the most excited of all the Arab peoples by the Arab Spring that began in December 2010 in Tunisia before spreading to Egypt and other countries in the region. They hoped that the Arab Spring would be the long-awaited means to bring about a more committed leadership of reformed Arab states to provide support to stop the Israeli occupation; to end their humiliating treatment by the Arab regimes; and to help in the process of Hamas-Fatah national reconciliation de facto stalled since the two parties' Inqisam (division) in 2007. It did not take long for Palestinian youth to realise that their cause was being left behind by the Arab Spring, which turned into an Arab counter-revolution and massacres of protesting civilians if not open civil wars within relatively few months. Palestinian young people came very quickly to the conclusion that they would need to change their own reality through their own tools. These were highly constrained by the unique circumstances of the Palestinian environment.

This chapter discusses the key ways out of the impasse in which the Palestinian youth movement, which took different shapes in the Gaza Strip compared to the situation in the West Bank due to the different contexts as explained below, finds itself. It outlines some strategies that involve a series of structural steps and reforms, such as university reforms and elections, local elections and the promotion of civil and intellectual freedoms. To explain these strategies, it first provides a background to the political context, then it reviews the general hopes raised in Palestinian youth by the Arab Spring. The following section describes similarities and differences between the situation of Palestinian and other Arab youth. It then delves into specific Palestinian youth actions to redress its grievances between 2011 and 2015. It also analyses the persistent obstacles to these actions and deepened youth frustration as a result. It concludes with the way forward and some recommendations.

3.1 The Political Context

The West Bank, Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip were occupied by Israel in 1967. Since then, these areas were under military Israeli administration until 1994 when the Palestinian Authority, PA, was created by virtue of the Oslo Peace Accord between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, PLO, which was and still is the representative of the Palestinian people inside the Palestinian territories and among the diaspora. According to this agreement, the PA was given a very limited governing authority over parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Hamas and Islamic Jihad movements are not part of the PLO and came into existence at least two decades after the PLO was established in 1964. These movements openly reject the Oslo Accords and

routinely call for its cancellation. The first parliamentary and presidential elections occurred in 1996. These elections were boycotted by Hamas and the Islamic Jihad. However, Hamas participated in the 2nd parliamentary elections which occurred in January 2006, leading to Hamas winning 74 seats of the 132 seats available and forming the government. Tension and bloody fights between Hamas and the PA occurred in the Gaza Strip throughout 2006-2007, which ended in June 2007 with the de facto political division of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip that came under two separate authorities. The President of the PA, Mahmoud Abbas, dissolved the government and dismissed Hamas, which – in response – rejected the presidential decree and remained in control of Gaza.

After Hamas took control of Gaza in June 2007, Israel reacted by imposing the blockage of the strip and heavily restricting the free movement of people and goods from and into the territory. Palestinians from Gaza who were living in the West Bank were forced to go back, while leaving Gaza was restricted to "exceptional humanitarian cases." Since then, the Gaza Strip has been periodically subjected to air, land and sea blockades by Israel and Egypt (Masi, 2014). As a result, the Palestinian cause has become more complicated and the Palestinian people have suffered not only the occupation but also the internal division between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. In this light, while the main concerns of youth in Gaza has been on lifting the Israeli blockage, youth in the West Bank have mainly had to confront the internal political division.

3.2 The Arab Spring: Palestinian Youth Hopes

Before the Arab Spring, the Palestinian cause featured in the political rhetoric of most Arab regimes. Political action on behalf of the Palestinians and/or against the Israeli occupation was, however, extremely limited and divided. With few exceptions, each Arab regime's political and financial alliances, and their understanding of their national security interests, moved either collective or individual Arab pressure on Israel, Fatah or Hamas to end either the occupation or the division far down their political agenda. Even the unprecedented 2008-09 Israeli war on Gaza had very little effect on these dynamics. This first of three wars on Gaza in six years was not game-changing in diplomatic terms or in the action of Arab states – as many Palestinians might reasonably have hoped that it would be.

The Palestinian people soon noted – for many with high levels of disappointment – that Palestine was not among the top priorities of the early Arab Spring: neither in Tunisia, nor in Egypt's Tahrir Square. This was the case even if Palestine, and especially the second Intifada, had been one of the key mobilising agents of the rare mass demonstrations

in the Arab countries across the previous decade. However, with pragmatism and understanding, Palestinians accepted that, at this early stage of their awakening, the Arab nations had to concentrate on the problems and demands of their own peoples, such as economic and social equality, democracy and transitional justice. It was hoped that once these demands were addressed, Palestine would be the next priority for the would-be newborn Arab regimes.

The Palestinians are all too aware of the limited possibilities of obtaining their political rights without the support of the key Arab countries (especially Egypt) and the international community. Trying to do so without Arab support runs the risk of alienating key Arab countries, by seeming to make the Palestinian cause a priority over these states' own domestic processes of reform. The Palestinian people in occupied Palestine, however, who suffer the existence of three overlapping authorities – the PA in the West Bank, Hamas in Gaza, and, crucially, the Israeli occupation of both areas – hurried to try to emulate the Arab Spring demonstrations. The young generations were especially enthusiastic that Arab Spring demonstrations seemed largely initiated and led by Arab youth, who for the first time in living memory at least seemed to have the power to challenge the "deep police state" with some chance of success.

3.3 A Palestinian Spring?

As the Arab Spring unrest started to unfold, the grievances of Palestinian youth might reasonably have appeared similar to those of youth elsewhere in the region, with the crucial distinction that the root causes of most of these grievances were ultimately determined not by their own governments but by a nearly 50-year military occupation. Like youth elsewhere, Palestinian youth had had to face decades of political authoritarianism and more or less violent repression of any political mobilisation that challenged existing power structures including both Israel and, since the Oslo Accords, the PA, but overwhelmingly the occupation. Their political and social horizons were limited by the lack of political freedoms and widespread unemployment, meaning very severely constrained options for political, educational and individual development, or for challenging the political system(s) as a whole on which their limited opportunities depended, and that determined every aspect of their lives.

Palestinian youth, however, also had very distinctive grievances related to the uniqueness of their situation, caught between the Israeli occupation, on the one hand, and, on the other, since the division, increasingly authoritarian rule by Fatah in the West Bank and

Hamas in Gaza. Palestinian youth did not have a single government to overthrow: in theory at least, they had three. A mass movement to overthrow the government of both parties at once, on the model of the mass movements elsewhere in the region, would thus have been incoherent: it would have left in place the de facto government of all Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza: the Israeli occupation. The premise for even slightly improving the freedoms and opportunities of Palestinian youth was therefore reforms or political dynamics that could lead to lowering the increasing authoritarianism of one or both Palestinian governing parties with a view to providing greater space for youth political action along the lines described at the end of this paper. Broader socio-political conditions, such as mass unemployment in Gaza, depended on larger factors such as Israel's continued occupation of Gaza, and the international politics indirectly supporting or sponsoring it. If other Arab youth, then, could reasonably hope that overthrowing their authoritarian governments could lead directly (even if slowly) to fundamental improvement in their economic and social conditions, Palestinians knew that gaining greater political freedoms (e.g., freedom of expression) by ending the division of rival Fatah and Hamas governments could be only a first step. The more substantial change in socioeconomic conditions desired by Arab youth everywhere could, for Palestinians, only come about through a second stage in which an effective movement to end Israeli occupation would emerge from these greater freedoms.

3.4 Palestinian Youth Actions and Forms of Mobilisation

As already mentioned, Palestinian youth have been closely following the Arab Spring led by Arab youth with great admiration. They thus hurried to copy it with the ultimate aim of bringing positive change into their reality. One of the first concrete actions was to call for mass protest to end the division by using social media as in many other parts of the Arab world. The chosen date was 15 March 2011. This outbreak of youth activism was positively welcomed by Palestinian society in general, but was also confronted with significant worries and suspicion from the two national authorities, Hamas in Gaza and the PA in the West Bank.

On 15 March 2011, thousands of Palestinian youths gathered in the West Bank and Gaza, calling primarily to end the then 4-year-old division between Fatah and Gaza. This became known as the "15 March Movement". Unfortunately but predictably, their movement was stillborn, meeting with severe policing measures from both national authorities in the West Bank and Gaza. Before the 15 March Movement, but also afterwards, Palestinian youth activism was characterised by a very high degree of political

polarisation along party lines, especially so since the division was institutionalised in 2007. With some exceptions, and despite attempts to promote a youth movement more independent from political party control, much if not all national-level youth political actions remained constrained by taking place within the framework of rival political parties (e.g., their youth wings), including within universities. Any major attempt to develop a movement outside party-political dynamics became especially difficult once the division was institutionalised and Fatah and Hamas became especially wary of any mass political mobilisation that would escape their control or challenge their authority in the West Bank or Gaza.

A deeper reason for the failure was disagreement within the youth movement itself. The main division lines concerned who and what should be regarded as the primary target of this movement and the question of whether several targets could be effectively confronted at once. Should they focus on the Israeli occupation first? Or should they instead face their own national authorities, which were and remain chronically divided? How could – and should – the protest movement focus on both simultaneously and, crucially, with real effectiveness? If the movement focused mainly on the West Bank or Gaza, how could it avoid being accused, by supporters of either Fatah or Hamas, of being just another tool in the political struggle between the two parties? If it left the occupation in the background of its slogans and actions, how could it avoid being accused of ignoring it by both Hamas and the PA? Was any "revolution" or sustained mass popular movement possible in the presence of an immovable occupation, and of the PA's "security coordination" with Israel in the West Bank that further limited the possible size and place of protests to small areas in the major town centres tightly-controlled by the PA? The single major achievement of the 15 March Movement was to put pressure on both national authorities, which eventually led them to their first reconciliation agreement that was signed in Cairo in May 2011, followed by a second one in Doha in February 2012. These agreements, however, remained on paper only, until a more comprehensive agreement, the Beach Camp Agreement, was signed on 23 April 2014, in which Hamas and Fatah agreed on a national consensus government, which was born on 2 June 2014. All in all, the more general goals and means of the 15 March Movement thus remained tied to the broader dynamics of national politics, the programmes of political parties and the rivalries between their political programmes (e.g., supporting or opposing negotiations with Israel and/or on what terms). Both the Palestinian youth movement and the national movement claimed to seek to end the Israeli occupation and the division between Fatah and Hamas. The West Bank/Gaza division itself, however, also institutionalised disagreement on the means by which this could or should be achieved and on what organised mass youth political action to confront the

occupation could look like in practice in each of the two parts of Palestinian territory which include the Gaza Strip and West bank cut off from each other.

With regards to the forerunners of the 15 March Movement, their goals and methods of action, the older *Hirak Shebabi* (youth movement) focused on "popular Intifada" methods of confrontation with Israel, especially around the West Bank wall. However, it remained confined to the West Bank, where some direct confrontation with Israeli soldiers still remains possible. In Gaza, since Israel's 2005 disengagement, the possibility of direct popular youth confrontation with Israeli soldiers has been all but impossible, except for rare and exceptionally dangerous marches to the Israeli-imposed buffer zone. More recently, the latest, online-only incarnation of a youth-based protest movement in Gaza was named Tamarrod (uprising) to echo the protest mass movement that prompted the Egyptian army to depose Egypt's elected President, Mohammed Morsi, on 30 June 2013, on the first anniversary of his election. The Palestinian Tamarrod in Gaza was predictably clamped down on by Hamas dissuasion, ahead of an announced "Day of Rage" on 11 November 2013 that did not materialise (Al-Ghoul, 2013).

Apart from weekly "popular Intifada" demonstrations against the West Bank wall and periodic exceptions (e.g. when short-lived Israeli-Palestinian negotiations restarted in August 2013), the only other national-level major popular demonstrations in the last few years took place in the West Bank in September 2012 against fuel and utility prices and the vastly increasing cost of living. While cost of living affects youth the most, the movement as such was not youth-led or youth-centred. Other protests have largely stayed confined to social media, with critics of the PA or its President on social media being not infrequently subject to arrest.

3.5 An Extreme Form of Resistance. Neither Intifada, nor Military Resistance: the Habbah

In early October 2015, an extreme form of resistance started in Jerusalem and the West Bank, in which Palestinian youth carried out stabbing attacks against Israeli soldiers and settlers. As of February 2016, 162 Palestinians had been shot dead and 12,000 injured by Israeli soldiers or settlers, while 31 Israelis had been killed and 500 injured. This wave of reciprocal attacks, which continues to this day, directly followed the speech by President Abbas at the UN General Assembly in which he declared that the PA would not honour previous agreements with Israel unless Israel lives up to its commitments. Abbas accused Israel of having systematically violated the agreements that date back

two decades and outline security, economic and other arrangements in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel during and after the 1967 war. Abbas said that there was no reason why the Palestinians should remain faithful to these agreements as long as the Israelis were not.

Many Palestinian, Israeli and international journalists, intellectuals and writers have sought to find a suitable terminology for this movement. Some call it Intifada, referring to the first Intifada which started in 1987, in which thousands of Palestinians protested peacefully against the Israeli occupation in both Gaza and the West Bank. The Second Intifada started in September 2000, when Israeli PM Ariel Sharon made a visit to Al-Haram Al-Sharif, an area sacred to both Jews and Muslims. As there are many differences between the two Intifadas and the current attacks, Palestinians have found it more suitable to call it a "Habbah". The concept of Intifada (uprising) carries a wider meaning, whereby thousands of Palestinians from all community segments went out peacefully against the Israeli military occupation in Gaza and the West Bank. Another aspect is that the first Intifada, though it was a popular movement, was led by political and resistance factions, while the ongoing attacks are driven by individuals who have no affiliation to any organised group. While the 1987 Intifada was led by local leadership who was affiliated to PLO factions and others, the current Habbah is considered to be indirectly against the PLO leadership and the PA that are seen by Palestinian youth to be compromised, old and corrupt. It is indeed a series of individual actions that are not controlled by any leader.

In particular, the ongoing Habbah is driven by a number of factors. The failure of the political process between the PA and the Israeli government over a very long period, and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)'s escalation in Jerusalem, along with settler violence are the main reasons behind the beginning of the existing uprising. In this light, the status quo in the West Bank is fragile and not in fact as calm as it was represented. This may be a consequence of the Palestinians' division since 2007, which has caused a state of frustration affecting all Palestinians politically, economically and socially and prompting the outbreak of youth frustration in particular. The leading contributors to this rebellion are the youth and women who do not belong to any political faction. Participants have no defined political background: neither Islamist nor liberal. This has prevented political parties from being able to organise the Habbah and has reduced their ability to influence the rebellion. The generation of the Habbah is the one born after the Oslo Accords. These youths have generally been analysed as politically "weak," unable to effect change, commonly derided as only caring about sitting in front of TV or PC screens chatting or discussing their fancy stylish hairdos. Many analysts previously thought that this

generation was not even slightly devoted to Palestine or the national cause. This view has, however, totally been turned upside down by the recent Habbah. What this outbreak of frustration and violence among the Palestinian youth ultimately shows is that there is a dangerous trend towards individual and community radicalisation against the backdrop of the stalemate of the political process.

3.6 "Arab Winter", "Palestinian Winter": Disillusion and Radicalisation?

Palestinian youth have noted the failure of the Arab Spring to bring about a fundamental change for the better. They have watched developments in Syria, Libya and Yemen as the Arab Spring turned into intra-Arab bloodshed and fierce and bloody counter-revolutions involving large-scale massacres of civilians. Events in Egypt have been particularly disturbing for Palestinian youth. A September 2015 Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR) poll found that 80% of West Bank and Gaza Palestinians believed Palestine was no longer the primary Arab cause,[47] suggesting that whatever hope had been invested in the Arab Spring creating new Arab regimes strong enough to stand up to Israel is long gone.

Young people have thus begun to look for other options that might have better chances of changing their reality than following others' revolutions. Nor can they simply replicate the Arab Spring model in what is arguably a uniquely complex and challenging environment for any mass protest movement, both in terms of the possibility of protest and in terms of the slogans that it could effectively arouse. Where others could chant "*al-sha'b yurid isqat al-nizam*" ("The people want to overthrow the regime"), Palestinians, faced with the Israeli occupation as their key *nizam* (regime) could chant only "*al-sha'b yurid inha' al-inqisam*" ("The people want the end of the division"). Even achieving the end of the division, however, was too much for a mass protest movement: it served the interests of neither of the two Palestinian governing authorities, in 2011 or since, despite many formal reconciliation agreements between the two (ICG, 2015).

Politically, the decline of possibility was enshrined by the overthrow of Morsi, in July 2013. Under President Sisi, who replaced President Morsi, the "war on terror" targeting the Muslim Brotherhood, with which Hamas is both affiliated and identified by the Egyptian regime, left no realistic prospect of positive political change in Egypt in the long term. By way of example, an Egyptian court listed Hamas as a terrorist organisation (the decision was later overruled for political reasons).[48] Crucially, Egypt has, for the first time since they were dug in 2007, destroyed almost all of the tunnels between Gaza and Egypt that

47 PCSPR survey, 2015 http://www.pcpsr.org/sites/default/files/poll%2057%20pressrelease%20English.pdf
48 See "Egypt court overturns Hamas terror blacklisting", *BBC News,* 6 June 2015. Retrieved November 7, 2015, from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-33034249

had enabled Gazans to survive the Israeli-Egyptian siege. On 19 September 2015, it began to carry out its plan to flood the very few remaining tunnels and the entire border area with seawater. President Sisi has also used the now Daesh-affiliated but decades-old insurgency in Sinai, which exploited the tunnels to smuggle weapons in and out of the Gaza Strip, to justify closing the Rafah crossing entirely for all but a very few days since Sisi's takeover over two years ago.

The status of the Rafah border crossing that connects Gaza with Egypt through Sinai may seem a merely technical issue. It is, however, the ultimate symbol of the blocked national-level political horizons that this chapter describes, comparable only to the 2-3 years from 2007-10 immediately following the Palestinian "civil war" of June 2007 and Israel's "Cast Lead" war on Gaza of 2008-09, before the Arab Spring. These blocked horizons have had an especially devastating effect on the youth. For young people, the unprecedented near to total closure of the Rafah crossing since Morsi's overthrow and the lack of any realistic prospect for change have meant no opportunities to develop their education outside the "prison" of Gaza. Most Palestinian youth in the Gaza Strip, who consider the Rafah border crossing as the only gate for them to exit Gaza, were hoping that the Egyptian leadership would ease the restrictions of the border crossing, which did not happen. This has negatively affected their level of trust and hope in the prospects for change brought about by the Arab Spring. Indeed, they cannot now realistically imagine even leaving the Strip.

In the current conditions that show no sign of plausible change given how strong the status quo is, even non-political youth aspirations – employment, marriage, building or buying a house – are more than ever out of reach. The levels of desperation produced by the latest Gaza war in 2014, unprecedented in its length, destructiveness and arbitrary targeting of civilians (including, crucially, the middle class) could be seen when, for the first time ever, hundreds of Gazans, including middle class youth, tried to flee to Europe by sea as soon as the war ended, drowning when their boats were sunk in the Mediterranean. Conditions have not improved since or shown any sign that they will improve in any realistic short-term future. Siege, war and the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism (GRM), the formally UN-brokered agreement but actually Israeli-imposed provision that was supposedly going to facilitate reconstruction but in reality reinforces Israel's control over Gaza, have given the Strip the highest unemployment rate in the world, at 41.5% (ICG, 2015). Youth unemployment in particular is the worst in the region at nearly 60%. According to a World Bank report, Gaza's GDP would have been four times higher than the current GDP were it not for the conflict and the blockade (UNCTAD, 2015). Only a surprise political agreement, such as the rumoured indirect

Hamas-Israel agreement on an offshore port to Cyprus, could change these dynamics. This has, however, been played down since early reports. It would in any case take several years to show any economic effect while such an offshore port is built. This unprecedentedly intense crisis of youth life-possibility in Gaza is thus here to last for many years, whatever other developments may happen.

In these circumstances, a tendency towards political radicalisation has become an option for, so far, very few Palestinian youths, though the Palestinian reality has, once again, its own specificity when compared to the other Arab nations in this respect. Calls by Daesh, which is now officially over the border in Sinai, to overthrow Hamas in Gaza have become more frequent, along with security incidents, among which, most recently, a series of small car bombs targeting Hamas leaders. A report by The Telegraph in June 2015 reported that "a wave of arrests resulting in the detention of hundreds of Jihadists over the past month reached a new peak this week when Hamas forces shot dead Youssef al-Hanar, 27, a local Salafist leader, in the northern Sheikh Radwan neighbourhood of Gaza City. Officials said he was shot during an attempt to take him into custody."[49]

The 2014 war at least temporarily restored the credibility of Hamas, and especially its military wing the Qassam Brigades, as a military resistance movement. This was especially true compared to the PA's inaction, and sometimes repression, of solidarity demonstrations in the West Bank: the PA seemed to many to be as concerned with denying Hamas any political capital from a "victory" as with uniting to obtain Hamas' demands for a seaport and airport, which were justified as humanitarian needs as much as political ones. Even the most liberal youths in Gaza could be heard telling Israelis that "in time of war, Gaza is Hamas and Hamas is Gaza" (Blumenthal, 2015). A year later, however, with Hamas' demands during the war not met and the siege still in place, the ability of Hamas' political wing at least to keep down the appeal of Daesh and a more general drift of disillusioned youth towards non-nationalist Salafi-Jihadism may be slowly declining without a political agreement to open Gaza's borders seriously, such as the offshore-port idea cited above. The number of youths sympathetic to Daesh remains, however, tiny, though some may already have used invented "Daesh affiliation" to guarantee world media publicity for their challenges to Hamas. Far more widespread (indeed, now almost universal) among Gazan young people is a desire to emigrate, if only to allow them to support their families in Gaza. But a lack of horizons for political change or emigration, since the borders closed by Israel and Egypt, means that even these remain an unachievable dream.

It was striking that the largest wave of social media indignation in Gaza on an internal issue in some time followed a very local event: the attempted suicide of the owner of a

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49 See "Hamas wages crackdown against pro-Isil jihadists in Gaza", *The Telegraph,* 4 June 2015. Retrieved November 8, 2015, from http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/gaza/11651691/Hamas-wages-crackdown-against-pro-Isil-jihadists-in-Gaza.html

corn stand on Gaza's Corniche, *Roots al-Ghalaba* ("The Little Man's Roots", referring to the name of Gaza's newest most upscale beachfront hotel cafe), after he claimed that Gaza's municipality had prevented him from working on various pretexts, including his plastic chairs spoiling the general view. The owner was hash-tagged as "Gaza's Bouazizi", in reference to Mohammed Bouazizi, the Tunisian street vendor whose suicide symbolically sparked the Arab Spring; calls were made online for Gaza's mayor to resign. Whatever the details, it indicated that readiness to react indignantly to perceived injustice of any kind exists, if primarily online-only. Social inequality inside Gaza may seem a side issue in questions of political mobilisation, not least since Gaza's middle class was targeted in the war like never before, with their symbolic apartment blocks destroyed. But any hint of perceived corruption or contempt for the poorest by any authority, even if it is municipal rather than national, is deeply sensitive, perhaps providing a hint of where a new youth movement in Gaza could first focus on the absence, for now, of a coherent national-level organising strategy. Class issues under occupation are more powerful in the heavily neo-liberalised West Bank, where economic inequality, an increasingly impossible cost-of-living and a lack of life-chances for youths not tied-in to Fatah and/or PA factional patronage, have been among the causes of protests of recent years, such as the 2012 ones mentioned above.

On a more directly political rather than economically-driven level, such factors as the rise of Daesh, even if marginal in Palestine, in itself pose special challenges for any paradigm-shifting Palestinian youth movement, potentially further helping justify any crackdowns on any directly political challenge by the rival de facto governments. More broadly, it will be very difficult to unify the youth as a movement on common political objectives, as young people themselves are profoundly divided: some affiliated with Fatah, others with Hamas, while a third (but not exclusive) group believe that struggling against the Israeli occupation must always remain the priority, and whatever distracts from this should be avoided. The main challenge for youth in Palestine to succeed in their demands is thus to identify what the issues, problems and demands are that youth can work on jointly as youth, i.e., as a national and social constituency with specific interests, independent of their political affiliations, to gain indirect influence on national authorities both in the West Bank and in Gaza.

3.7 Conclusions and Recommendations

Pal-Think for Strategic Studies has been working with Palestinian youth in many areas, including education, dialogue, culture and training programmes. Pal-Think has hosted

several meetings between Palestinian youth and EU representatives to discuss ways of cooperation.[50] Currently Pal-Think is working with the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) to implement a one-year project that aims to educate Palestinian youth around issues such as democracy, and political and economic rights.[51]

In order to gather the relevant information for this analysis, Pal-Think organised a workshop with representatives of a variety of youth groups, including youth affiliated with Hamas and Fatah. The workshop showed that the young participants clearly agreed that the key aim of the Palestinian youth movement(s) should be to encourage active political participation, and to promote democratic practices and unification of the Palestinian people in an effort to end the internal political division and work towards the shared goal of a free Palestine. These priorities also arguably reflect disillusion with the counter-revolutionary turn of the Arab Spring and the overwhelming specific challenges described above. In a September 2015 Pal-Think questionnaire delivered to 25 Gazan students, many (10/25) expressed not supporting the "Arab popular revolutions". Few to no respondents said that the revolutionary movements had achieved their objectives, e.g., social reform and democracy. Every written response confirmed the view that the results of the general repression following the Arab Spring had made the Palestinian crisis worse rather than better, as first hoped.

Opinions of the 15 March Movement were similarly negative and pessimistic, blaming its failure on confused strategy and aims, for the reasons described above, and its repression by force, cooptation and/or de-legitimation by both rival national authorities. Although it was named a "youth movement", in reality it was a temporally-bound gathering of Palestinian youth in Gaza and in the West Bank, which dissolved a few weeks after its creation without achieving any major contribution to the Palestinian youth's cause. This reality is linked to the general political circumstances of Palestine itself. After an initial push soon after the movement's establishment, reconciliation remained on paper only, even after several agreements and nearly a decade of division between Fatah and Hamas. In theory, a government of national unity was formed in July 2014, but formal reconciliation has proven to be an empty shell, leaving the essential elements of the division in place. Even the illusion of agreement was undermined by the Ramallah PA's unilateral reshuffle of the "consensus" government in July 2015. Responses to a question on youth tendencies towards extremism highlighted the chronic factors of Gazan political, economic and social conditions, ranging from unemployment and nepotism to political divisions and internal "intellectual intolerance".

What then are the ways forward from this arguably unprecedented impasse for a Palestinian youth movement in general and for a Gazan one in particular, given the more limited possibilities for confronting the Israeli occupation directly? One possibility would

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50 For more details, see http://palthink.org/en123/?p=695

51 For more details see http://palthink.org/en123/?p=8005

be to focus on university student unions as a key player in any broad and politically effective youth movement. These organisations should prepare students for political life after graduation, as citizens in a free Palestine. Clearly, the core of the student unions' work should be to promote political training and good governance principles (in a locally convincing and not an exclusively donor-imposed sense) to set the example and not simply to act as lobby institutions and youth brigades for the political factions in Palestine, as they largely currently do. Participants at the Pal-Think workshop session said that the current economic dependence of many students and student organisations on the patronage of the main political parties in Palestine, Fatah and Hamas, was acting to create and further divisions internally amongst university students, weakening rather than helping to promote a strong student movement.

Student unions should primarily aim to free themselves of corruption and influence from political factions, aiming, in the first instance at least, to defend the interests of all students as students, independently of social status, field of study, religious belief or political stance. Only by promoting values of freedom of speech, freedom of association and tolerance, above the interests of factions that can contradict these principles, can the student unions successfully create a youth movement strong enough to speak on behalf of all students to end the political division and re-energise the youth movement. Student initiatives need increased support and encouragement, as they are the pillars of political change. This support should come not from political parties but from the administrative departments at the universities, as well as from civil society organisations and NGOs who can encourage youth to make their own agendas independent of the agendas of supporting a certain political ideology or certain donors, particularly when external agendas are far from local ones.

A free and independent Palestine may not happen today or tomorrow. But youth need to be active in shaping a better future for themselves and the future generations of Palestinians. They can only do this if they build social and political influence *as youth*, meaning the huge majority of Palestinians, and especially of Gazans, and are given tools to actively work towards its shared goals outside the current paradigms of political patronage. The strategy that remains to be discussed in detail in future policy work, therefore, is how to make a reality out of creating a youth movement; a movement which can:
- unite the youth, independently of their relation to any of the political factions;
- work to build internal tolerance;
- foster institutional democracy able to sidestep existing divisions, including, crucially, in universities and at the municipal and local government levels; and

• develop a more inclusive education system in order, in the broader picture, to eventually influence the political reality of Palestine.

Concrete proposals to unify the youth movement include but are not limited to:

(1) Improving and modernising educational institutions and practices, including with the support of external partners, in particular the European Union (EU);
(2) Implementing the students' council elections at all universities, both in Gaza and the West Bank;
(3) Implementing new municipal elections (the latest in the Gaza Strip were held in 2005) to re-energise politics at the local level in light of the existing roadblocks at the national one; and
(4) Ensuring freedom of expression and protest for the youth movement(s).

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4. Fostering a Youth-Sensitive Approach in the EU's Policies towards the South and East Mediterranean Countries — The Case of Tunisia

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Youth has been one of the major actors in the social protests of the Arab uprisings in 2011. Since then, the situation of the young generations in the SEM region has not really improved; in many countries it even worsened (e.g. Libya, Syria, Yemen). The Tunisian case is particularly relevant, given the fact that the Arab uprisings started in Tunisia and that it is the only country left where a democratic transition process is still going on. Tunisian youth were particularly active during the revolutionary phase in 2010/2011, but today many young people are disappointed by the outcome of the revolution. Why is that so? What happened after 2011, and how is the youth's situation today? What has been done in order to respond to their aspirations and political demands? And what else could the EU do in order to support and to empower the young generation? The paper suggests that beyond classical youth empowerment, employment, education or cultural exchange programmes, and next to matching and interlinking of existing youth programmes, a youth-sensitive approach is needed. The youth-sensitive approach should be considered and "mainstreamed" in all EU external policies directed towards the SEM region.

In order to respond to the aforementioned questions, in a first section the paper addresses (1) the aspirations and concerns of Tunisian youth. The second section (2) explains what is meant by a youth-sensitive approach in EU policies and how it could be fostered, before the third section (3) has a closer look at existing and potential tools of EU policies tackling youth challenges in the SEM region.

4.1 Aspirations and Concerns of Tunisian Youth(s)

As in most other countries of the world, the young generation in Tunisia is aspiring to employment, education, mobility, freedom, justice, personal development, participation and recognition, while contesting disrespect, discrimination, injustice or marginalisation.

Unemployment is one of the central concerns: According to the 7th Annual Arab Youth Survey 2015 (Burson-Marsteller, 2015), for 81% of young people in the SEM region unemployment is the second most important concern, after security. Every year thousands of young people enter the labour market, missing professional and personal perspectives. Youth unemployment was and remains particularly high in Tunisia: 33.2% in 2015 (compared to about 25-30% between 1984 and 2010, for the 15-25 year olds), and it can reach up to 40%, depending on age, region or sectors.[52] Next to vulnerable groups (e.g. in remote areas), young women are particularly concerned (about double the number of young men). And there is a high number of young people who are not

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52 See BAfD, OCDE, PNUD 2015: African Economic Outlook: Tunisie 2015. Tunis: BAfD, p. 2.

enrolled in school or in work. Besides these groups, graduates are especially concerned with 31.4% (2014).[53] Recent developments have even shown that the higher the educational level, the fewer the chances a young person has in the labour market. Among the around 650,000 unemployed persons (plus an estimated 600,000 non-registered unemployed), about one third (250,000) are university graduates.[54] This paradox is due to different factors: the existing education curricula are often not adapted to the rapidly changing requirements of the labour market (skill mismatch in terms of technological knowledge, innovation or soft skills). During the last decades, there has been massive access to higher education while quality has been neglected. Due to missing foreign and domestic investments, and due to the economic crisis, the number of available qualified jobs is simply insufficient in relation to the large youth population ("youth bulge"). The young labour force in Tunisia has grown too fast over the last decade, and the state was unable to find rapid and sustainable answers to this challenge and to create new job opportunities. In addition, 5% growth would be needed in order to create the 80,000 new jobs needed per year.[55] But the growth rate fell to only 2-3% (2013, 2014) after the revolution and to only 1% in 2015. In addition to three severe terrorist attacks in 2015, the economic crisis and the low level of foreign investments create an economic environment that is not propitious to job creation. However, despite the difficult economic context, 39% of the young generation could imagine starting a business within the next five years (Burson-Marsteller, 2015). But political, economic and financial framework conditions for young start-ups or self-employment are not very encouraging.

Mobility was and remains another major aspiration for youth. Against the background of the new and quickly changing political and societal transition context, one aspiration remains the same: mobility. The wish to be mobile and to be able to travel freely can have many reasons: improving professional or educational perspectives, acquiring personal development, maintaining family or friendship ties, gathering cultural capital, or simply visiting places and having fun, as for instance their European peers can do. But the major motivation for young Tunisians to leave their country has a socioeconomic character: the wish to make a career or to have a better life in Europe or elsewhere abroad. Out of a total population of 11 million citizens, about 1.2 million Tunisians live abroad (about 10%). Most live in France (55%, 669,000), Italy (15%, 189,000), Germany (87,000), Libya (69,000), Gulf States (60,000), Canada (20,000) and the United States (15,000).[56] Under the Ben Ali regime, young Tunisians (an average of 1,700 per year in the time period of 2000-2010) took the clandestine sea road to Italy, in order to escape from repression, unemployment, frustration or despair (Natter, 2015). This escape was dangerous for different reasons: perilous sea passage, those who got caught went to prison, their families were repressed. During the Tunisian revolution and briefly after, many

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53 See,BAfD, OCDE, PNUD 2015: African Economic Outlook: Tunisie 2015. Tunis: BAfD, p. 2.

54 See "Tunisie. Révision du programme Amal pour les diplômés chômeurs", *Kapitalis,* 17 March 2012. Retrieved December 20, 2015, from http://www.kapitalis.com/societe/8868-tunisie-revision-du-programme-amal-pour-les-diplomes-chomeurs.html

55 Interview with expert, Tunis, 4 September 2015.

56 See Office des Tunisiens à l'Etranger (OTE)/Direction de l'Information et des Relations Publiques (DIRP) (2012). *Répartition de la Communauté tunisienne à l'étranger.* Tunis: OTE/DIRP. Retrieved December 20, 2015, from http://www.ote.nat.tn /fileadmin/user_upload/doc/Repartition_de_la_communaute_tunisienne_a_l_etranger__2012.pdf

young people capitalised on the confusing situation and absence of border controls: about 26,123 irregular migrants came to Italy (2011-2014), out of which about 15,000 were forcibly returned (Natter, 2015). After the fall of the Gaddafi regime in Libya, the port-city of Zarzis, close to the Tunisian-Libyan border, became a sort of "migration hub" (Boubakri, 2013).

Many young people would in fact prefer a more adequate education system in Tunisia, or simply the ability to grow up in a culture where exchange semesters and working qualifications are seen as essential. Until the 1990s, the majority of migrants were low- or semi-skilled workers or family members; more recently, youth unemployment among tertiary-educated youth has triggered new flows of student and high-skilled emigration, especially to France, Germany and North America (Natter, 2015). This also means a brain drain for the Tunisian economy that is in the middle of its transition from a low cost economy towards a higher added-value economy. Once this transition is successfully achieved, the Tunisian labour market will need more qualified and high-skilled workers, and more unskilled labour migration from other African countries. Therefore, since 2011, the government has changed its migration policy, in the sense that it increasingly tries to attract highly qualified Tunisian returnees, instead of exclusively encouraging regular emigration (in order to increase the remittances of about 5% of the GDP). This means, that in the mid- and long-term the situation on the Tunisian labour market might relieve pressure, and thus youth migration might decrease, too. But in the current situation, the pressure on the labour market remains high and therefore so does the migration pressure. Independently from labour migration, a young person's decision to leave the country can have many reasons, most of all personal ones, such as the desire to pursue career advancement and professional self-fulfilment abroad. The recent restriction for people under 35 to travel to Turkey or Libya is understandable from a security perspective (5,000 Tunisians are fighting for the IS in Syria), but at the same time it limits the right of free movement of people. Seen from a constitutional and human rights perspective, this regulation is questionable.

Next to this kind of radical ideological motive to migrate in order to become a Jihadist in Syria, there are of course numerous other drivers of irregular migration, such as repressive policies on legal migration, economic reasons (a multi-faceted mix of unemployment, low wages, living conditions at home and abroad, poverty, inequality), network ties and the culture of migration in certain sending areas, or smuggling and trafficking (Browne, 2015). In most cases, a combination of factors influences decisions to migrate (Ibid.). These kinds of aspirations to migrate already existed prior to the Tunisian revolution but have been reinforced since 2011. After a first moment of enthusiasm and hope for

change of the situation of youth in Tunisia, disillusion returned and other countries (mainly in Europe) again became attractive for education, employment and safety reasons.

Next to employment and mobility, political participation was another demand of the young generation. Young people were both agents and objects of the revolution and following transition process. Civil youth activism has been at the heart of the Tunisian revolution, constituted of a sequence of social, political and cultural transformations. There was and still is an important demand amongst young people for fundamental freedoms and rights. Many had idealistic expectations of a rapid transformation of the country and expected immediate improvements through political and economic inclusion. However, about five years after the fall of the Ben Ali regime, the transitional process has not met the youth activists' expectations: young people continue to be underrepresented in political decision-making bodies, and their daily lives and socioeconomic situations have only changed to a limited extent (or even worsened). Many are disappointed and have already withdrawn from politics again, after a great civil societal involvement and commitment in 2010/2011 and the enthusiastic phase right after the revolution. In 2011, young (cyber) activists were part of the transitional governments for a short time period; many of them created enthusiastic new civil society organisations and debated the new meaning of citizenship. In 2015, five years after the revolution, youth's disenchantment with politics is widespread. This became visible for instance in the low voter turnout among the youth in recent elections: 80% of 18-25 year olds boycotted the parliamentary elections in 2014 (50% of the under 30s voted in 2011). And, in the meantime, it also became evident that despite the increased amount of civil society organisations (CSOs), the number of young people that are really active in these organisations remains rather limited, and that for instance only 3% of the rural youth participate in CSOs.

The revolution was also an expression of an inter-generational conflict, in the sense that the young generation did not feel understood nor represented by the political leaders of the Ben Ali regime (most of them "old men"). The next generation of qualified 25-40 year-old graduates (and among them more than 50% female graduates), who were waiting to take the lead and to change things in the country, did not have the possibility to access power, unless by clientelism or corruption. The revolution changed the picture but it also stirred up new tensions and differences among the young generation, between secular and religious, between radicals and conservatives, or between different interests of urban and rural youths. We cannot speak of "youth" as a single unit, since as a group youth is diverse and divided. These divisions do not help to overcome the lack of inclusion in political institutions and decision-making bodies: they rather require a new political culture that can take into account civil political dissent, credibility and legitimation. Some

political parties are trying to go ahead in this sense, and youth departments were established, such as the "Jeunes d'El Massar" or the "Jeunes Patriotes-Démocrates WATAD", but the disconnection between the young generation and the political establishment remains big. But this new political culture would also need to go beyond party politics and to include more tolerance for alternative ways of living, youth subcultures and all sorts of diversities.[57] Youth is the age of trying and testing, and of identity searching. Like young people all over the world, youth in Tunisia are increasingly linked to their peers via social media. These global developments go hand in hand with the increasing influence of transnational currents in Tunisia since 2011 as the country is living less under a repressive protectionist bell but rather exposed more intensively to external influences of all kinds.

Important aspirations or concerns also include recognition, self-development and the search for meaning. The severe repression of political Islam, but also of Islamic identities under the Ben Ali regime has among other factors contributed to a rise of political Islam and new religiosity after the revolution. Here again, we cannot speak of one youth or one Islam. Some young people discovered peaceful forms of Sufism or Salafism for themselves, a new spiritualism, or a moderate form of political Islam in party politics. Meanwhile, a small minority of the young generation got involved in extremist Salafism spread by radical preachers in the context of the power vacuum that existed after the revolution. In particular in universities, radical Salafist students started to challenge the defenders of the separation between state and religion (Marks, 2012). The search for meanings and for social recognition by peers groups or the feeling of being part of something, of a common group or adventure, the reasons for joining radical Islamist groups are manifold. The comparatively high number of young Tunisians choosing to join the Islamic State (IS) in Syria raises the question within the Tunisian society about what went wrong with parts of this young generation and why Salafism has become so attractive for young people (Silveira, 2015; Biegler-König, 2015). It is not only young people from the South or the neglected regions in the interior of the country who joined the IS, but there have also been cases reported of young graduates from middle class families who have become the victims of ideological brainwashing or extremist social media propaganda or financial promises by professional IS recruiters. These young people secretly disappear from one day to another to become "martyrs". Of course, this recent phenomenon only concerns a very small percentage of youth in Tunisia, but the group of young Tunisians among the Jihadists is one of the largest, with an estimated 5,000 Jihadi fighters in Syria. The motivations to join the IS are very different. However, in Tunisia, so far no one has found efficient anti-radicalisation and prevention measures or re-integration approaches for those who come back from Syria. The insane attraction

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57 The human rights situation and freedom of expression have much improved since 2011. However, there have also been several severe and disproportionate sentences against young bloggers, youth activists and young homosexuals. For instance, in April 2012, two young bloggers were sentenced to 7 years in prison for having published Mohammed cartoons on Facebook and others for anti-religious graffiti. The issue of freedom of expression remains problematic. A young man, Marwan, was sentenced to one year prison for being homosexual.

and pull force that radical Salafism (as illustrated by IS) exerts on some parts of the young people has become an ideological challenge and has turned into a struggle between different society models. This development might encourage the young radicals even more to continue on their brutal path of self-destruction and their attitude against the liberal and open society model. For other parts of the young generation, the security situation represents a major concern: they are worried about the sudden rise and growing threat of the IS in the region and in Tunisia, about the negative impact of the civil war in Libya, and about the future of the Arab uprisings democratising legacy in difficult transitional contexts (Burson-Marsteller, 2015). This great variety of youth concerns (unemployment, limited professional and future perspectives, youth marginalisation, growing urban-rural divide, limited political participation and voice, limited mobility, insecurity, search for meaning etc.) hinders the young generation to develop its full future potential.

4.2 Fostering a Youth-Sensitive Approach in EU Policies

With regard to these concerns of the young generation, the EU as an external actor cannot and should not directly interfere in the political, economic or social integration of the young generation in Tunisian society but it can foster a horizontal youth-sensitive approach in its own policies. The general objective of such a youth-sensitive approach is youth development in a broad sense. Youth in Tunisia is one of the vulnerable groups of the society, in the sense that important parts of the youth are disadvantaged and socially marginalised, and over-represented among the unemployed. "Pro-poor" strategies should therefore also be "pro-youth" strategies, and sustainable development cooperation should also address them. Further objectives of a youth-sensitive approach can be the avoidance of marginalisation and stigmatisation of young people, the inter-generational knowledge transfer and dialogue on cultural values, the highlighting of young people as a human resource, the increase of political participation or the benefit of young people's new ideas, skills and contributions.

This approach does not only affect the EU's external foreign policy and external economic policy, but also the EU's human rights, social or cultural policies. Next to horizontal gender or sustainability approaches in EU policies, a youth-sensitive approach or "youth mainstreaming" could become another inherent principle to be kept in mind. This means that the EU should consider the youth dimension while designing, launching, implementing, monitoring and evaluating its policies. The role of the EU is not to tell the youth how to proceed, but merely to offer tools that allow young people to deal with their

specific situations. This is the only way to avoid an amalgamation of European good will with memories of a colonial past, and to avoid the export of European concepts without thinking about how they can be integrated or contested by local actors. Norms and practices of Tunisian society and the place of young people in that society need to be understood and linked to universal human rights principles in order to address inequalities and to achieve positive outcomes that respect the diversity of the youth.[58]

A youth-sensitive approach should go beyond the simple policy of the youth ministry. Youth issues should rather be mainstreamed by cross-cutting different ministerial, department or European Commission sectors including for instance culture, health, economic development, housing, justice, foreign affairs, education and communication or agriculture. Youth mainstreaming does not only mean reflecting, addressing and being sensitive to youth but also looking at the impact of a policy on youth, and involving young people more intensively in decision-making processes in those policies that affect them.

The growing interaction between the young and the not so young and between civil societies in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East has multiplied and given greater visibility to an emerging trans-Mediterranean civil society. Young people constitute an important part of this increasingly interlinked civil society. They share the same objectives: more rights, more social justice, more transparency, more control over dominating systems, and the search for a new model of living together (López García, 2012). Trans-Mediterranean means that concrete problems might be different in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, but their nature is the same: e.g. youth unemployment (in Southern Europe and North Africa), prolonged dependency on parents, difficulties in becoming autonomous in the working world, family and society, the search for meaning and recognition, or the search for personal and professional perspectives.

Fostering a youth-sensitive approach in the EU policies could mean:

(1) Better listening to young people's visions of participation in decisions that will influence their life within a political community,
(2) Engaging youth in the development of ideas on how people can live together, while having different beliefs, and how to live with dissent as an unavoidable cultural element in modern societies,
(3) Developing together with young people a perspective on how to overcome social inequalities, partially inherited from the past, fostered by the dynamics of global capitalism (and neo-liberalism), and how to create a world that guarantees the welfare of all.

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58 See United Nations Development Group (2015). *Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues,* United Nations. Retrieved December 20, 2015, from http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/UNDG_guidelines_EN.pdf

The general problem is to find out how the EU can contribute to creating a political, economic and socio-cultural environment for this young generation that will be capable of dealing constructively with these issues. One way to concretise this approach could be strengthening youth actorness in the new political order through increased political participation and representation, linking self-empowerment to institutional and party politics or to civil society organisations. Another way is fostering the spirit and development of young entrepreneurship, linking young people to the labour market, by improved access to finance and business training. A third way is youth empowerment by facilitated access to mobility and education, which allows young people to acquire the necessary cultural capital. Cultural capital is not only needed for personal development, but also for inclusion in the labour markets, in the sense of becoming an autonomous, employable person. And facilitating access to cultural and social resources and competences can help young people create new tools for handling diversity.

Thus, the EU should foster the self-empowerment of young people and contribute to the understanding that youths themselves are also responsible for their personal and political environment, and that they can shape and influence their personal future as well as the future of the societies in the SEM region.

4.3 The EU's Toolkit to Tackle Youth Challenges in the SEM Countries

One way to develop a youth-sensitive approach is to adapt the approach within the EU institutions dealing with policies having an impact on the youth in the SEM region, and with youth programmes as such. Here, instruments such as capacity-building on youth mainstreaming, establishment of youth mainstreaming focal points in EC departments (DGs) and working units, or the integration of youth mainstreaming in planning, budgeting or evaluation procedures can be useful. Another way is to develop a youth-sensitive approach within the existing and newly-planned programmes having an impact on the youth or purely youth-targeted programmes.

Internally or intra-EU-wise, the EU is already implementing a differentiated EU Youth Strategy (2010-2018), and is mainstreaming cross-sector initiatives ensuring that youth issues are taken into account when formulating, implementing and evaluating policies and actions having an impact on young people, such as education, employment or health.[59] But with regard to the EU's external policies, this approach is less developed. The situation in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the major EU policy framework directed towards the Southern Neighbourhood, is different. Here,

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59 See Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions (2009), *An EU Strategy for Youth,* COM (2009) 200 final, Brussels, 27 April 2009. Retrieved December 20, 2015, from http://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth_strategy/index_en.htm

the EU offers, for instance, different regional cooperation programmes, such as institutional dialogue, economic integration or sustainable development. These programmes also touch upon youth's situation but the youth dimension is not yet "mainstreamed".

There is a great variety of specific youth programmes: for instance, the Euro-Med Youth Programme originally launched under the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), and now implemented under the umbrella of the ENP, is destined to encourage mutual understanding, intercultural dialogue, active citizenship and a sense of solidarity among young people from the region. It also seeks to contribute to the development of youth policies in the SEM countries, offers youth exchange programmes for youth organisations, voluntary services and support measures for youth organisations (training, networking). Currently, the programme is in its fourth phase: Euromed Youth I (1999-2001), II (2001-2004), III (2005-2009) and IV (2010-2016). EuroMed Youth IV has a budget of 11 million Euros. In different SEM countries, Euro-Med Youth Units have been established.[60]

Besides Euro-Med Youth, there is the programme Networks of Mediterranean Youth (NET-MED Youth). The project is implemented by UNESCO but funded by the EU.[61] The objective is capacity building of youths, enhancing network building and involving young people in the development and revision of public policies having an impact on them. The programme addresses ten SEM countries, including Tunisia.

In terms of education and training, the EU Project Governance for Employability in the Mediterranean (GEMM) aims at enhancing the quality and relevance of vocational education and training, and thereby the employability of young people.[62] Quality assurance and management is an important principle in this context, in order to assess and increase the effectiveness of vocational education and training programmes.

The Mediterranean New Chance (MedNC) project, established by the Tunisian Manouba University (Institut Supérieur de Comptabilité et d'Administration des Entreprises), is labelled by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and partly funded by the EU.[63] The project is aimed at school dropouts and unemployed graduates (in Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria).[64] It has a training approach as well as a business and social approach, and is inspired by the training model of Second Chance Schools (E2C).

60 See http://www.enpi-info.eu/mainmed.php?id_type=10&id=307 (Retrieved September 23, 2015).

61 Time frame: 2014-2016; Budget: 8,800,000 Euros. See http://en.unesco.org/node/244469 (Retrieved September 23, 2015).

62 The project period was 2013-2015, the budget 2 million Euro. Partners from eight SEM countries participated, including Tunisia. See http://www.enpi-info.eu/mainmed.php?id=569&id_type=10 (Retrieved September 23, 2015).

63 See http://ufmsecretariat.org/mednc-new-chance-mediterranean-network/ (Retrieved September 23, 2015).

64 During the first programme 17 teachers, 15 volunteer trainers and 22 students were involved: 5 participants have found a job and 8 participants extended their internship. See http://www.enpi-info.eu/medportal/news/latest/41708/Project-offers-new-chance-for-young-people-excluded-from-job-markets (Retrieved September 23, 2015).

Besides, there are opportunities for young people to get involved in different ENP civil society programmes (e.g. Democracy Endowment). And, since 2011, the EU has increased the number of Erasmus Mundus scholarships, and tries to multiply educational and professional opportunities for young people. However, the number of this kind of European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) South master student scholarships remains rather small, with for instance a total of 30 scholarships for Tunisian students in 2013.[65] The SALTO-Youth project has existed since 2000 and is a network of eight resource centres working on EU priority areas within the youth field.[66] It is part of the European Commission's Training Strategy and provides informal learning tools for youth workers and youth leaders, and organises training activities and part of the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme of the EU. The SALTO-YOUTH Euromed resource centre organises training activities in particular for young people from the SEM region.[67]

However, as the aforementioned project selection illustrates, many of these EU programmes often continue to be organised in cooperation with state authorities and/or youth organisations close to the state, and offer little space or incentives for bottom up approaches or informal initiatives. There are few or no links between the programmes; some do not know about or some do not take into consideration the existence of the others, and potential synergies are not exploited. The youth-sensitive component of these kinds of programmes could be further developed because, for instance, those young people (e.g. remote areas in southern or central Tunisia) who would need personal incentives to get involved in empowerment or exchange programmes are often not reached by these opportunities. The visibility and number of young people from neglected or socially marginalised areas who are involved in these programmes are very limited. The effectiveness of youth programmes also depends on the ability to understand the cultural dynamics of the communities, groups or individuals they work with. Young people can be involved more intensively as peer researchers and informants about their current situation and concerns.

Young people from the SEM countries should also be fully involved in the development of the conceptualisation of these kinds of EU programmes from the beginning in order to listen to and integrate their aspirations and needs, as well as in the implementation and evaluation processes. The EU could also try to support the passage of young people from a "virtual citizenship" (activism only on the Internet) to a formal political participation (at local and national level) going beyond virtual citizenship. Building effective employment programmes, improving access to quality education, and fostering innovation and entrepreneurship are important priorities. Developing a horizontal and comprehensive youth-sensitive approach in the EU's external policies towards the SEM countries is equally important with a view to reversing the current trends.

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65 See http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/results_compendia/documents/statistics/2013/statistics_by_
nationality_erasmus_mundus_masters_students_selected_for_the_academic_year_2013-2014_(category_a).pdf
(Retrieved September 23, 2015).
66 See https://www.salto-youth.net/about/ (Retrieved September 23, 2015).
67 See https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/euromed/ (Retrieved September 23, 2015).

However, the capability limits of the EU's toolkit and its youth policies and programmes must be recognised. None of the aforementioned policies or programmes will by itself be able to sustainably combat such complex challenges as for instance unemployment or Salafist radicalism. Nevertheless, what youth policies can do is to raise awareness of the urgency and specific character of youth challenges in other policy domains (e.g. external economic policy or foreign policy), and thus indirectly contribute to solution-finding processes.

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EuroMeSCo

Comprising 102 institutes from 32 European and South Mediterranean countries, the EuroMeSCo (Euro-Mediterranean Study Commission) network was created in 1996 for the joint and coordinated strengthening of research and debate on politics and security in the Mediterranean. These were considered essential aspects for the achievement of the objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

EuroMeSCo aims to be a leading forum for the study of Euro-Mediterranean affairs, functioning as a source of analytical expertise. The objectives of the network are to become an instrument for its members to facilitate exchanges, joint initiatives and research activities; to consolidate its influence in policy-making and Euro-Mediterranean policies; and to disseminate the research activities of its institutes amongst specialists on Euro-Mediterranean relations, governments and international organisations.

The EuroMeSCo work plan includes a research programme with four publication lines (EuroMeSCo Joint Policy Studies, EuroMeSCo Papers, EuroMeSCo Briefs and EuroMeSCo Reports), as well as a series of seminars, workshops and presentations on the changing political dynamics of the Mediterranean region. It also includes the organisation of an annual conference and the development of web-based resources to disseminate the work of its institutes and stimulate debate on Euro-Mediterranean affairs.

IEMed.

The European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), founded in 1989, is a consortium comprising the Catalan Government, the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and Barcelona City Council. It incorporates civil society through its Board of Trustees and its Advisory Council formed by Mediterranean universities, companies, organisations and personalities of renowned prestige.

In accordance with the principles of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership's Barcelona Process, and today with the objectives of the Union for the Mediterranean the aim of the IEMed is to foster actions and projects which contribute to mutual understanding, Exchange and cooperation between the different Mediterranean countries, societies and cultures as well as to promote the progressive construction of a space of peace and stability, shared prosperity and dialogue between cultures and civilisations in the Mediterranean.

Adopting a clear role as a think tank specialised in Mediterranean relations based on a multidisciplinary and networking approach, the IEMed encourages analysis, understanding and cooperation through the organisation of seminars, research projects, debates, conferences and publications, in addition to a broad cultural programme.

IAI
Istituto Affari Internazionali

Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI). Founded by Altiero Spinelli in 1965, does research in the fields of foreign policy, political economy and international security. A non-profit organisation, the IAI aims to further and disseminate knowledge through research studies, conferences and publications. To that end, it cooperates with other research institutes, universities and foundations in Italy and abroad and is a member of various international networks. More specifically, the main research sectors are: European institutions and policies; Italian foreign policy; trends in the global economy and internationalisation processes in Italy; the Mediterranean and the Middle East; defence economy and policy; and transatlantic relations.

The IAI publishes an English-language quarterly (The International Spectator), a webzine (AffarInternazionali), two series of research papers (Quaderni IAI and IAI Research Papers) and other papers' series related to IAI research projects.